ANSWERING THE CALL, 4 | HOLIDAY LIFE, 25 | SLICE OF LIFE, 52

wethersfield
# LIFE
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Volume 3, Edition 3

## Where rubber meets the road

### L'Etoile has racing in his blood

*See story on page 48*

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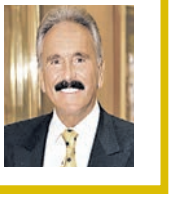

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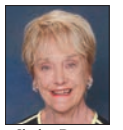

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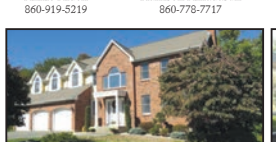

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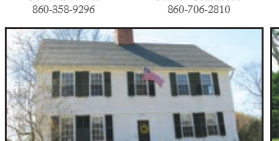

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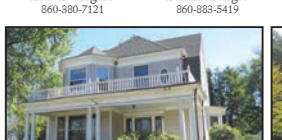

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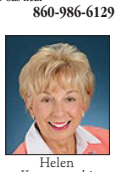

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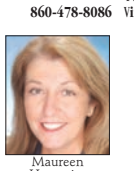

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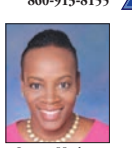

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## QUOTE OF NOTE:

"It was a total UNICO sponsorship. The model behind our jamboree was let them be kids and have fun."

*– Emidio Pizzoferrato*

**See story page 14**

## ON THE COVER

**Frank L'Etoile Jr. is following a family tradition of stock car and go-kart racing.**

**Photo by Lisa Brisson**
See story page 48

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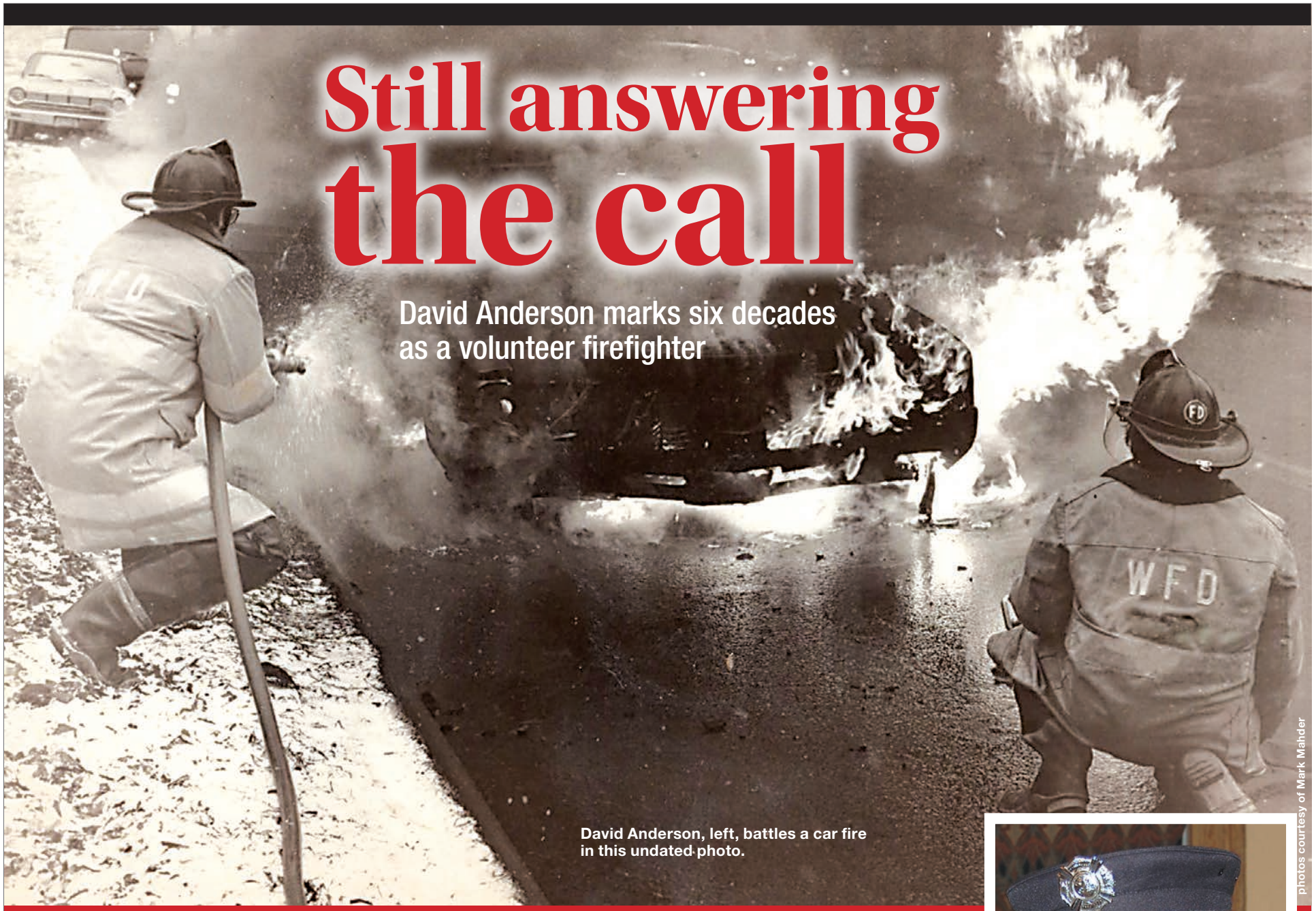
# Still answering the call

## David Anderson marks six decades as a volunteer firefighter




David Anderson, left, battles a car fire in this undated photo.

photos courtesy of Mark Mahder

**by Mark Jahne**
*Editor*

He is considered a living treasure by fellow members of the Wethersfield Volunteer Fire Department. David Anderson has been responding to calls to help his neighbors for 60 years and has no intention of retiring just yet.

Anderson, 79, the owner of Anderson Farms in Old Wethersfield, is a firefighter with Company 1 on Main Street. He's not some kind of retired or associate member, he's a full-fledged, active member, the same as the other men and women, some of whom are young enough to be his grandchildren.

He still responds when the radio tones out a call. He is certified to do interior firefighting, the most challenging kind, and to drive any of the company's apparatus.

He's also certified to don full gear and the self-contained breathing apparatus that active firefighters wear when on duty at an emergency scene.

His longtime friend and former assistant chief Mark Mahder said there may well not be another volunteer firefighter anywhere in the country who can still pass those rigorous certification requirements at 79.

Anderson became a probationary firefighter in 1955 and a full member of the department a year later. Over the decades he spent time as treasurer and on the board of trustees of Company 1.

"My brother was in the fire department and my father had retired from it," he recalled

He was born July 28, 1936. His father's years of service were from 1916-1931.

"He was in [the department] 14 years before I was born," said Fire Chief Rich Bailey, who is approaching his 30th anniversary with the department.

"He's the senior guy. He passes all the tests to be an interior firefighter every year. He is, by far, the hardest worker that I've ever met. I've lived across the street from him for 15 years."

Bailey said Anderson exemplifies the local tradition of generations of families volunteering for the fire service. Anderson's father, uncle and great-grandfather did so before him. His nephews Craig and Chris are also members of Company 1.

Their late father Jim, who was David's brother, served the local department while earning his living as a career firefighter in West Hartford.

Bailey added that Anderson engenders a huge amount of respect within the department. A dinner was recently held to honor his lifetime of service and more than 200 people were in attendance.

David Anderson recently celebrated 60 years as an active volunteer firefighter.

That event was put together by Mahder, former public information

officer Dick Fippinger and Lt. Geoff Nielson. Anderson was promoted to the rank of captain emeritus.

He received numerous gifts from his fellow firefighters as well as proclamations from the state legislature and U.S. Congress.

He regularly attends drills and weekly training meetings, even though his work day often starts before the sun rises and ends after dark. He believes in his continued

**"He raises the bar and makes us better people because of it."**

**– Capt. James Ritter**

commitment.

"It's the challenge of doing the right thing for the right people," he said. "There are an awful lot of dedicated firefighters in the town of Wethersfield. I made lots of good friends over the years."

If there is a flaw to be found in the man, it's that his response rate to emergencies during prime farming season is limited because of the needs of his business.

His duties owning and operating the farm keep him busy 16 hours a day from May through October so he only responds to a limited number of calls during that time period. Nobody holds that against him, but he feels badly about that and wishes he could do more.

As soon as the farm winds down in October he starts responding to emergency calls again at any hour of the day or night. Bailey estimated that Anderson's response rate may be as high as 80 percent in that November through April period.

"My business grew, so I couldn't be as active as I wanted," he said.

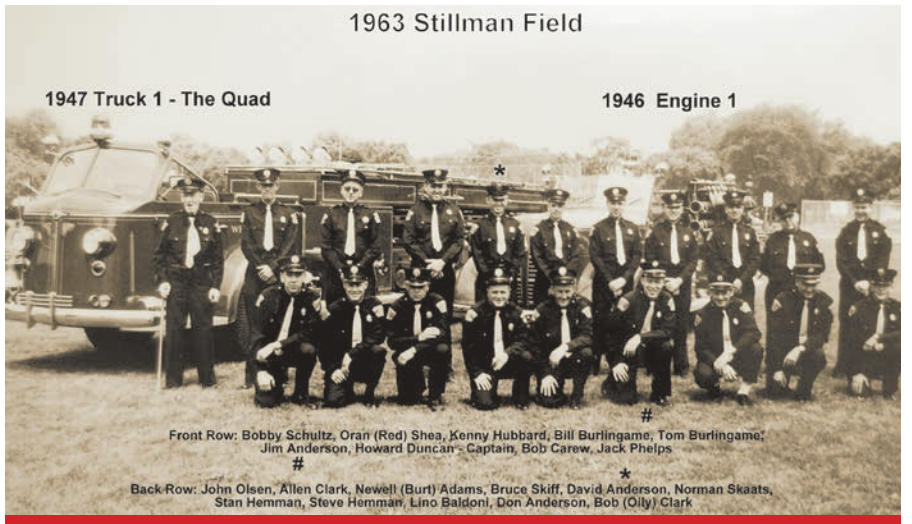
Anderson is proud of his active status and the fact that he continues to respond to fellow citizens in need. He continues to meet all of the training requirements.

"I can still wear a Scott air pack, but I don't do a lot of interior fire fighting right now," he said. "I try to help where I can. I know my limitations."

He credits his high level of physical fitness to the fact that he does not smoke or drink. He never married and has no children. Anderson won a battle against cancer in 1974.

His most memorable emergency is one that occurred shortly after he joined the department 59 years ago. Trains had to stop and wait because hoses were strewn across the tracks.

"The first fire when I first got on was OK Rubber Welders, a tire place on Middletown Avenue. It was fully involved," he said.


1963 Stillman Field
1947 Truck 1 - The Quad
1946 Engine 1
Front Row: Bobby Schultz, Oran (Red) Shea, Kenny Hubbard, Bill Burlingame, Tom Burlingame, Jim Anderson, Howard Duncan - Captain, Bob Carew, Jack Phelps
Back Row: John Olsen, Allen Clark, Newell (Burt) Adams, Bruce Skiff, David Anderson, Norman Skaats, Stan Hemman, Steve Hemman, Lino Baldoni, Don Anderson, Bob (Oily) Clark

**David Anderson, fifth from left in back row, and his late brother Jim, sixth from left in front, were already veterans of the Wethersfield Volunteer Fire Department in 1963.**

As he recalled, the staff unsuccessfully tried to quell the blaze at first, so by the time firefighters arrived smoke and flames were everywhere. He also thought back to a time when the town was much less developed and the southern end of the Silas Deane Highway, now full of buildings, was mostly open land.

Fire-fighting technology has changed dramatically through the years as well and he has constantly worked to keep up with that.

Nephew Craig Anderson, a career firefighter in New Britain as well as a volunteer at Company 1, talked about his uncle's lifetime commitment to the fire service and how the department treats him.

"They love him. They ask him questions, he's the go-to guy. He loves it – that's his social thing," he said.

"He is the moral compass of our company. He always does the right thing," his friend Mahder said. "He really has the respect. When David talks, people listen."

Capt. James Ritter, a veteran member of the department and its new public information officer, agreed.

"He's one of the foundation stones the department is built on.

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He's shown that commitment time and time again," he said.

Ritter called Anderson a true gentleman who is always willing to help the community. Younger firefighters may wonder about the senior citizen in their midst at first, but they quickly learn that he is revered by his colleagues.

"They're not really sure what to make of him at first. It very quickly becomes apparent to them that he holds a special place," Ritter said.

He can often be spotted coaching and watching out for the new guys at fires and other emergency scenes. That garners him further respect. He is known for visiting fellow firefighters when they are in the hospital or otherwise indisposed.

"David is an active firefighter. He's an interior qualified firefighter. That in itself earns him so much respect," he added. "He takes the duty and responsibility of being a volunteer firefighter very seriously and very personally."

Ritter said some members struggle with striking the appropriate balance between their jobs and their volunteerism. Not Anderson.

"He has always been able to make that balance work. David set a great standard for that."

"He has driven every generation of ladder truck this company ever had. How many engines has he driven?" Mahder said. "He's like the Energizer bunny. He can't be replaced."

"The fire department and Company 1 is very much part of his family. He lives it every day," Ritter said. "He raises the bar and makes us better people because of it."

Chief Bailey hopes that the example set by Anderson will encourage other residents to join WVFD.

"We can definitely use more members," he said. **WL**

Anderson stands alongside old Engine 5.


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# Grant's Way helps out

## Foundation named in honor of Grant Stanton works to leave a lasting legacy

**by Allie Rivera**
*Staff Writer*

June 27, 2013 is a date that will stay in Leigh Stanton's mind forever. It was on that day that Stanton's son, Grant, died from a rare type of cancer called an inflammatory myofibroblastic tumor after being diagnosed in 2012.

"Losing a son is life changing," Stanton said.

A 2007 graduate of Wethersfield High School, Grant Stanton went on to earn an associate's degree in business from Manchester Community College and was nearing completion of his bachelor's degree from the University of Connecticut before his death.

More than his academic pursuits, Grant is remembered by family and friends for his positive spirit, love of town and unique sense of humor.

"We've been good friends since we were young. He's like a brother to me," Mike Sanzaro said. "That kid always had a smile on his face. Nothing could bring him down, and if you ask anybody in this town about him, they'd say the same thing."

An avid sports lover, Grant played baseball on his high school team as well as later on with Capital Construction in the town league where he also served as a board member. According to his friends and family, he spent a great deal of time at Mill Woods Park.

It was with that knowledge that his

photos courtesy of Leigh Stanton

**Wethersfield High School graduate Grant Stanton died June 27, 2013 at the age of 24 from an inflammatory myofibroblastic tumor. Since then, his family and friends have worked to keep his memory alive by improving Mill Woods Park, a place where he spent much of his time.**


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father, Leigh, looked to use the worst day of his life as a catalyst for change by starting the Grant's Way Foundation.

"We really started out with the thought of, let's have a softball tournament in Grant's memory," he said. "We thought it would be a nice way to keep his memory alive."

Stanton assembled a board of directors for the Grant's Way Foundation consisting of his own friends, including Lou Delmastro, Ron Hemmann and Dave Herold, as well as friends of his son including Sanzaro, David Herold and Peter Brzezicki. Grant's sister, Haley, and her boyfriend Matthew Williams also serve.

For the older members of this foundation, their history spans back to their own days as students in town. Stanton played baseball with Delmastro and Hemmann in junior high school, and although they've stayed in touch since then, they say their work together on the Grant's Way Foundation has brought them even closer together.

"One thing I know about my involvement with this foundation is that it's brought a lot of us back together," Hemmann said. "It's something good that came out of this tragedy."

**"We wanted his name to live on somehow."**

**– Lou Delmastro**

As the organization began preparing for its first softball tournament in the spring of 2014, members of the group began to come up with new ideas of what the foundation could do.

"We started thinking more broadly," Stanton said. "Mike Sanzaro had the vision of creating a bridge between softball fields one and two."

Stanton and his team began working with the town Parks and Recreation Department and found that their idea to build a bridge between the two fields aligns with the department's master plan for the park.

Foundation members decided that their tournament would be the first major fundraiser that the organization would hold to raise money for the bridge project. Calling the first year a success, the organization held its second annual tournament this past spring and a golf tournament on Oct. 23.

"We want this to be more than just a softball thing. It's a community thing," Hemmann said.

"Grant was a giving person and this is a giving organization that reflects what Grant was about," Delmastro added.

Members admit that raising the funds for the bridge will be a long process and they are grateful for the support that they have found both from residents and from town government, which has been instrumental in the planning process.

"Our goal is to very soon be in front of the Town Council and next we want to make feasibility plans and get estimates," Stanton said. "We've already started to get support from people around town and we're


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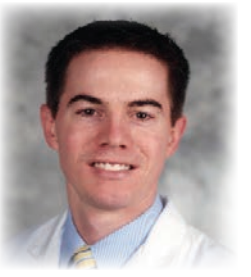
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hopeful that we may be able to get some volunteers and grants."

Although the bridge project is a top priority at the moment, members of the foundation also hope to be able to speak with the town about naming the second softball field at Mill Woods in honor of Grant.

"If that becomes Grant Stanton Field, this organization will really take care of that field," Hemmann said. "We will make sure that it's always the best field."

Haley is happy to be working with the foundation to honor her brother.

"I think the things we've done are what he would have wanted," she said. "He was such a nice kid always, and he made me a better person, so I enjoy doing this for him."

In addition to the fund-raising efforts the organization has undertaken, members of both the foundation and the community at large have begun doing small acts of kindness in Grant's memory.

"Folks have been performing random acts of kindness in Grant's name," Stanton said. "An important element of life is to do kind things, even if it's a small part."

Stanton and the rest of his team have printed up small cards that have begun circulating throughout the community. On one side are written the words "You've just experienced a Random Act of Kindness" as well as "Spreading the magic of love through small acts of kindness."

The other side of the card has a photo of Grant along with the Facebook information for the foundation. Stanton hopes that with both the tournaments and fundraisers, as well as the kindness cards, the organization will be able to expand and do more to benefit the park.

"Part of our goal is to be a big part of the community," he said. "We do anticipate and hope for growth while staying in the spirit of what we are, which is a community organization."

Those who knew Grant personally said that the idea of building a community and working together to improve the park is the outcome he would have wanted after his death. Those who knew him best hope that by continuing to improve Wethersfield, they can keep his memory alive.

"Grant seemed to epitomize what every father would want in a son, every teammate would want in a teammate, and every friend would want in a friend," Delmastro said. "We wanted his name to live on somehow." **WL**

*For more information about the Grant's Way Foundation visit facebook.com/grantsway.*

**The Grant's Way Foundation has held two fund-raising softball tournaments in honor of Grant Stanton. The organization hopes to raise enough money to build a bridge between the two softball fields at Mill Woods Park.**

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# ‘Living a life that helped other people’

## Phil Knecht is dedicated to making the world better

**by Mara Dresner**
*Staff Writer*

If one thinks 80-year-olds spend their days in rocking chairs reminiscing about the good old days, try spending some time with Phil Knecht. Knecht, who turned 87 on his birthday of Nov. 9, earned his degree from Capital Community College in 2012 at age 84.

He had already been awarded an honorary degree from the school in 2007.

“Phil is the epitome of a lifelong learner. He is curious about everything going on in his community and the world, and he doesn’t sit on the sidelines, but throws himself into every activity he partakes in,” said Jane Bronfman, director of marketing and public relations at the college.

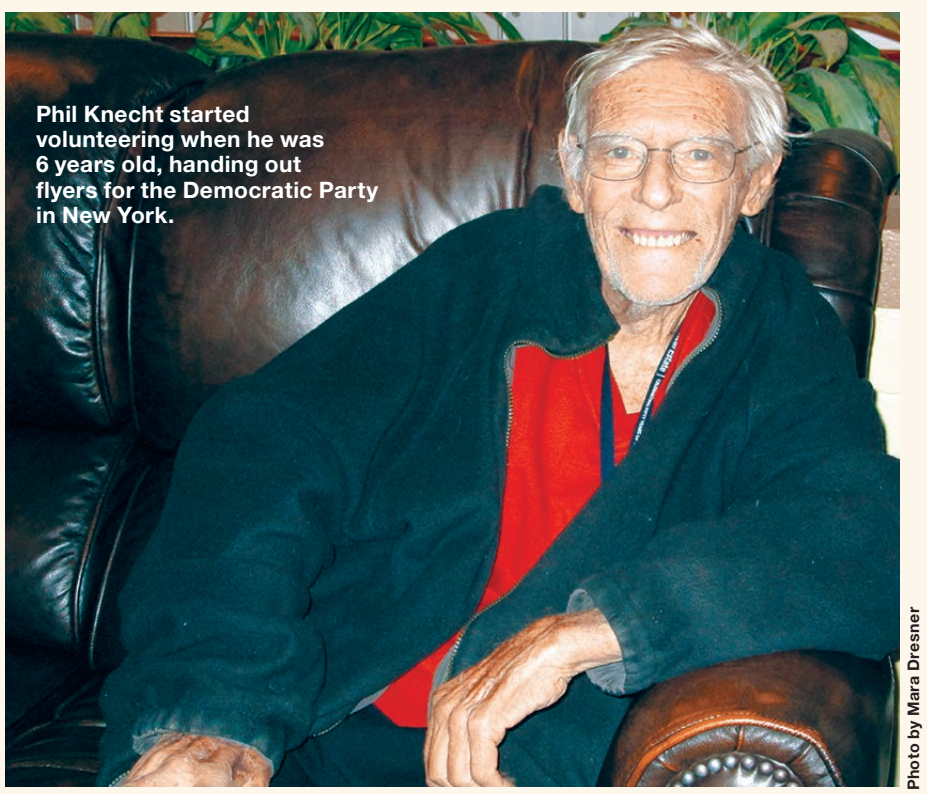
“On top of that he is a genuine people person, and sincerely cares about others,” she added.

She has known Knecht for 13 years.

“Phil has been a familiar face at Capital Community College for over two decades. He started as a teacher in our Continuing Education division, teaching Real Estate Principles and Practices – and when he was 65 years old, began taking classes for himself,” Bronfman said.

“He selected courses that interested him, mostly one at a time, as he was also a residential and commercial real estate salesperson, and later on a property manager and landlord in Hartford.

“Phil had many other activities he participated in, especially politics. Since 1959 he has worked for various political campaigns in the state and



Phil Knecht started volunteering when he was 6 years old, handing out flyers for the Democratic Party in New York.

Photo by Mara Dresner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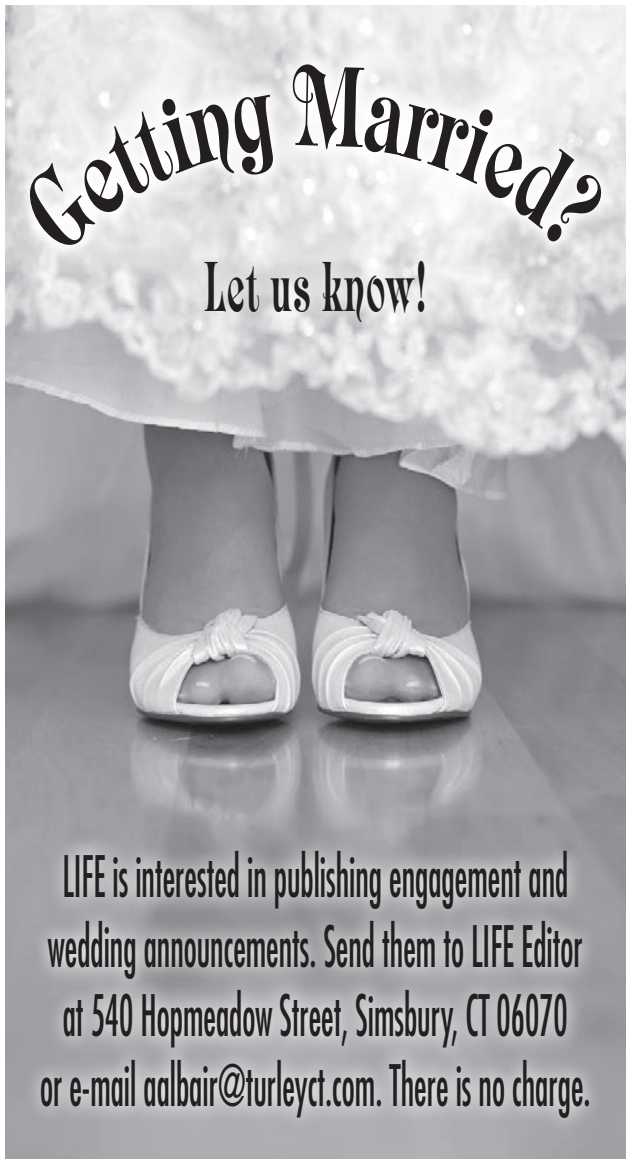
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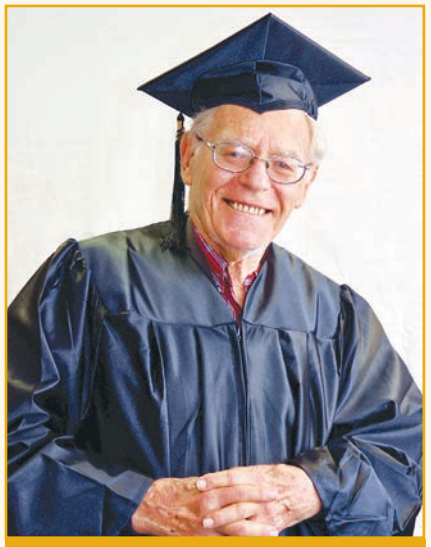

Courtesy photo

**Phil Knecht earned his degree from Capital Community College in 2012 at the age of 83, making him the oldest person to earn a degree from the school.**

was notorious for getting the voters out."

Knecht is a former member of the student senate at CCC and a lifetime Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society member. He is the school's oldest graduate.

"Phil's contributions to Capital have enhanced the college in many ways over the years: as a teacher, as a mentor to younger students and as a community volunteer. It was our good fortune that it took Phil 20 years to earn his degree, as we had the pleasure of having him around all this time," Bronfman said.

"Now, as an alum, he continues to invest time and energy in the college because he believes deeply that education holds the key to success and happiness."

Knecht has been involved in a variety of community activities, starting when he was a boy.

"I grew up in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, N.Y., and my first volunteering was when I was 6 years old where I handed out flyers for the Democratic Party," he remembered.

He even dabbled for a while in the Mafia.

"They were very nice, but after two summers, they decided I was too nice a guy, so they gave my mother money to buy shoes and clothes for me to go to school so I would look good and told my mother, 'He better get good grades or we'll take care of him.'

"So I went to high school and I was on the honor roll for most of the year," Knecht said. "I graduated high school in 1947 and became employed as a stock boy" in a store on 14th Street.

When it went out of business, he got a job at S. Klein's on the Square, a women's clothing and accessories store.

"They give you a tape measure. They tell you to make sure you help the woman put the tape around, but don't touch. Then I got promoted to assistant buyer of ladies' dresses, scarves, neckwear," he said.

"I became very good at that and I developed a clientele of the best hookers in the city. I sold them a thousand dollars of clothes each. They were well dressed."

Knecht continued his career in Connecticut when his boss became manager of a chain of discount stores, moving here in 1957. He first lived on Magnolia Street in Hartford. Two years later, the family bought a house in Newington.

"We had a lovely home. On Wednesdays, when I was home early, the children in the neighborhood [would come] and I would serve them cookies and milk. It was a joy. We would sit in the backyard and that's what we'd do," he said.

After his divorce following 30 years of marriage, Knecht lived in Hartford's West End for 14 years before being introduced to another woman.

"We met and enjoyed each other's company. This woman's husband died in front of her. We got married," he said, "but she wasn't ready to get married."

That's when he moved to Wethersfield, where he has lived for the past 22 years. His career has taken a number of turns. At one point, he was offered a position in Washington, D.C.

"I read about the economics of Washington and Maryland," said Knecht, who decided it was too risky to accept. "Whoever went down to Washington suffered. They lost their jobs. I was lucky."

It didn't mean that this was an easy time.

"I was scared stiff. I had a house, I had two children. I didn't know how to pay the mortgage. My insurance man came by, and said, 'We're assembling people to take tests.' One [evaluator] said I was a failure; the other one hired me. I went from 44th to tied for first in sales," Knecht said.

"Then I met a person by the name of Nick Carbone. We worked together to help people. At that time, I moved onto 149 Warrenton Ave. in the West End, which I think to this day is the best community in the state of Connecticut," he added.

"I proceeded to get involved with a real estate agency. I wanted to add to my licenses. I made a career of real estate sales, mostly helping people who were low income."

That included helping hundreds of widows who needed assistance with leases or mortgages, as well as teaching people how to save money to buy a house and how to be a home owner.

"You had to teach them how to own a house; they had no idea," said Knecht.

Through the years, he has spent countless hours volunteering for a variety of organizations, including the Democratic Party and Hands On Hartford.

"As long as I can live, I want to wake up in the morning and see how I can help somebody," he said.

He is currently fighting a battle with cancer.

"Phil is such a dedicated member of the community, with a sincere concern about hunger and homelessness in the Hartford area, and truly

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willing to take action to support our less fortunate neighbors," said Barbara Shaw, executive director of Hands On Hartford.

"Phil never misses any of our holiday meals. He is always there to welcome guests with a smile and an open heart," added Wanda Guzman, its community engagement manager.

"Basically, volunteering does a couple of things. It helps you impress an employer and I got jobs from time to time because of my volunteer work. But it also gives you back something special," said Knecht, who often is invited to fund-raising dinners.

"They invite me. Some of these dinners used to be 25 bucks, now they're $150, but I get a lot of dinners. You meet a lot of people, so it is an avenue for employment in whatever your heart tells you [that] you want to do. Every time you help someone, it comes back to you."

He's also volunteered for Hartford Areas Rally Together, helping people qualify for mortgages. While he'd sometimes make a real estate sale, there was a greater satisfaction than the commission.

"The thrill ... when you take a broken-down house and they fix it and they invite you to the house for a housewarming. I met so many friends," he said.

He also volunteered for a decade as director of publications for the Hartford Capitols basketball team.

"I also had the experience of being in the locker room when the first woman reporter did an interview of a ballplayer in a locker room. It was interesting because the woman waited so long to get the opportunity and some of the ballplayers were a little brash and came out of the shower and some 'accidentally' dropped their towels," he recalled.

"She was astonished, but determined. She told those guys, 'I waited a long time for this opportunity. You can stand there naked all you want, I'm going to interview you,'" he said.

"But the ballplayers at that time were gentlemen. They had more respect for the fans. The money they were making was not the money they are making now. It was a wonderful experience."

He had the opportunity to travel with the team and remembers a game in Camden, N.J.

"Jersey Joe Walcott – he was a heavyweight boxer who became a sheriff in Camden – he met the bus with the guns, as he escorted us to an empty gym with no fans. It was necessary at that time," he said.

Knecht believes that getting an education is of high importance.

"Everyone has to have an education. I also believe that if you are educated in Spanish and English, you probably have a good chance of having a career for the rest of your life," he said.

It's a lesson he imparted to his children Wendy and Sherry.

"Having two children was the greatest gift that God could give me. I've been a lucky parent in my children never got into trouble or drugs, and my grandchildren never got into trouble or drugs, and a lot of grandparents cannot say that," Knecht said.

"I brought them to a halfway house to see what it was like to take drugs and they made their own decision. We would have breakfast every single Sunday morning. They had to be at the table.

"We had music in the house all the time. We talked about issues, we talked about drugs, we talked about education, we talked about living a life that helped other people."

"It has been a pleasure getting to know Phil better these last eight years. Although I kept seeing him around for decades, it was through his association with Capital Community College that we began to bond," said former Hartford mayor Pedro Segarra.

"Phil is an incredible human being whose passion for life, civic engagement and community progress are essential. In Phil's world, we cannot truly succeed if we do not all succeed," he added.

"Phil has been a hard worker over the years and his resiliency and determination during his life should be an inspiration to all," Segarra said.

"What impresses me the most is that, despite his medical challenges, Phil is always positive and thinking of what else he can do to make his community better and contribute whatever he can. I am so grateful to have had his support, but more importantly, his friendship." WL

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## LIFE Quotes

*Failure will never overtake me if my determination to succeed is strong enough.*
*Og Mandino*

For 35 years, the annual UNICO Youth Soccer Jamboree was an opportunity for children to enjoy the game in a non-competitive environment.

Courtesy photo

# A sad farewell

## UNICO Soccer Jamboree comes to an end after 35 years

**by Mark Jahne**
*Editor*

For 35 years, the Wethersfield chapter of UNICO hosted an annual soccer jamboree to celebrate the joy of the game. Thousands of children participated.

There won't be a 36th this year.

Interest in this free event has declined to the point where it just doesn't make sense to do it any longer, according to club officials. They said they are deeply saddened by this reality.

Parents and young soccer players reading this may wonder how that can be. After all, soccer has been growing in popularity in this country for many decades, especially among children.

The answer is that the UNICO event was intended for recreational-level players, 10-year-old boys and girls who just wanted to have a day of fun kicking the ball around the fields at Mill Woods Park.

Nobody kept score. Nobody was criticized for making a bad play. The focus was solely on the enjoyment of the game.

With the increased popularity of soccer, however, came an increased emphasis on the level of play, even at the youngest ages. Local youth leagues have become more competitive over time and are not as interested in participating in such an event. Travel teams were never part of the jamboree because they are, by design, competitive.

UNICO started its event for all

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children, but especially for those who would probably never become skilled enough to play at the travel or interscholastic levels. Those involved never wanted it to become a competitive tournament.

The emphasis was always on what UNICO calls "recreational" players, children who play soccer just for the fun of it. The first jamboree was held in 1980 and the final one occurred this past year. Club members spoke about what happened and why they are so disappointed.

Morris Borea gave Fred Odell most of the credit for coming up with the idea of the jamboree and getting it started. They had no trouble getting players at first, not just from Wethersfield, but from Glastonbury, Newington and Rocky Hill.

"It was those four towns for many years," Emidio Pizzoferrato, president of the chapter, said.

Berlin and Cromwell joined along the way. The usual attendance was between 150 and 200 players, but over the years it became increasingly difficult to get enough teams to commit to a purely recreational event.

"A number of towns moved toward competitive soccer. They were moving away from recreational soccer," Pelino Silvestri said.

The jamboree was always held on the first Saturday of November. The town Parks & Recreation Department prepared the fields and supported the effort in an overall sense.

"Basically, they would donate the fields," Silvestri said.

The games were played at Stillman Park and Silas Deane Middle School from 1980 to 1995, when the event moved to Mill Woods.

**"It was total UNICO sponsorship. The model behind our jamboree was let them be kids and have fun."**

**– Emidio Pizzoferrato**

"Because we did it for so many years it got better every year and we kept adding stuff to it," Borea said.

Everything was free for the players. UNICO paid the referees and gave away balls, shirts, food and programs with a team photo inside.

The men estimated that it cost the club between $2,000 and $3,000 each year but it was part of its commitment to support the community and fulfill the UNICO motto of "service above self."

"It was considered a give back," Silvestri said. "The idea wasn't to make money, it was to give back to the community."

"It was total UNICO sponsorship. The model behind our jamboree was let them be kids and have fun," Pizzoferrato added.

He said there was stunned silence in the room when he announced at a recent club meeting that the event would not take place this November.

The jamboree also included a clinic taught by local high school coaches as well as a few professional soccer players over the years. That was free, too. Games were played in a round-robin format using four fields at once.

To make the day even more exciting they would contact the high school and ask for a few musicians to come play the National Anthem. They always got more than they requested.

"Dave Dion would bring the entire Wethersfield High School Marching Band," Silvestri said. "Folks came and would make an afternoon of it."

Pizzoferrato said over the years they began to see more and more players who were the children of earlier players. They hoped to expand into a third generation, but that will not happen.

"We really enjoyed seeing the kids walking around town with their UNICO shirts on," Borea said.

Every child got to play in at least three games. The only time the jamboree was cancelled was in November 2011 when a powerful early season snow storm right before Halloween knocked out power and ground life to a halt for eight days in most parts of town.

There were many tasks to be performed to make the jamboree happen but UNICO members stepped up and took on all those volunteer jobs. The men said their club got great joy out of making so many children happy.

"Many hands make light work and that's how we operate," Borea said.

He pledged that UNICO would find another activity for children to fill the void. It will also be sports related – lacrosse is one possibility.

"We're going to come back and do something else," he said.

He added that the club will make sure not to do anything that conflicts with the activities of the Richard M. Keane Foundation. UNICO and the foundation enjoy a close relationship. **WL**


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# Staying strong

## Classes strengthen older adults' bodies and help prevent falls

**by Allie Rivera**
*Staff Writer*

Every 18 seconds in this country, an older adult is treated in an emergency room due to injuries from a fall. Every 35 minutes, an older adult dies from those injuries.

Caroline Woodard simply refuses to accept those statistics without doing something to improve the situation.

"The numbers are so shocking that falls are the leading cause of injury and death in people over 65, and most of them are preventable," she said.

Woodard, a licensed physical therapist, is certified in the Fall Stop ... MOVE STRONG program, a nationally recognized exercise series for older adults designed to prevent falls.

"It's so near and dear to my heart," she said.

A physical therapist since 1987, she began doing orthopedic work with dancers and athletes but quickly started working with the elderly as well. Since then, she has shifted to working almost exclusively with older adults and is a per diem physical therapist at Genesis Healthcare rehabilitation center.

Hoping to make a change in the statistics regarding falls, Woodard began looking into different programs offered for fall prevention. At first, she was disappointed with what she found.

"The balance programs that were being offered were boring and not effective," she said.

In recent years, Woodard discovered Fall Stop ... MOVE STRONG, a program developed by Celeste Carlucci, a fitness and wellness expert and former dancer in New York City. It is slowly spreading across the country.

"I found this and it was exciting and fun and, why I like it, evidence based," Woodard said.

Research on the effectiveness of the program was conducted by the Martha Stewart Center for Living at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York for its ability to target all major muscle groups, increase strength and improve flexibility, reflexes and balance.

"We do objective measurements on their first week and their 10th week," Woodard said. "It's so exciting for people to see that in 10 weeks you've actually lowered your fall risk."

In order to achieve this, she conducts objective measurements with each person who takes her FSMS class. That includes a functional reach test to see how far forward a person can reach while standing, as well as what Woodard calls a timed up and go.

"They start sitting, then stand, walk 10 feet, come back and sit," she said. "Research has shown that if you can do that in under 10 seconds, you're at a lower risk of falling."

For the functional reach test, she said that after 10 weeks of the FSMS class, the average reach increases by four to six inches.

The classes, which she just recently brought to town, focus on both cardio and weight training to improve balance and muscle strength.

"We do weight training on our feet because that builds healthy bones," she said. "If you do just cardio, your risk of falls doesn't go down as much as cardio plus weight training."

Those who have taken classes with Woodard say the guidance she gives is something that has been carried into their daily lives.

"Some of the things that she has shown us, we have carried through and it has been a big help for us seniors," Joan Gronda of Manchester said. "We really got a lot out of it and we appreciated the fact that she was so kind do it for us."

Woodard said it is important to her to provide fun and effective classes that will help senior citizens.

"Balance is something that can get better if you practice, so to practice it in a safe environment with someone who knows how far you need to push yourself is great," she said.

As part of the class, Woodard educates seniors on ways to work on decreasing their fall risk.

"There's a lot of good information that you get through this," she said.

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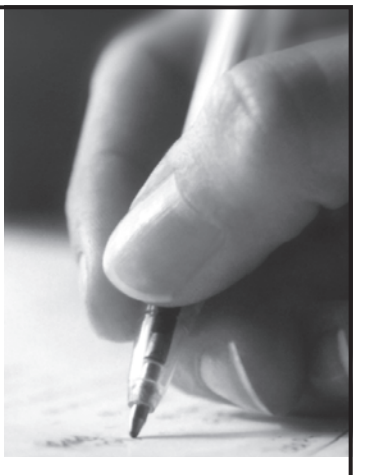

Mail letters to 540 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 0670 or email Abigail Albair, at aalbair@turleyct.com.

photos courtesy of Caroline Woodard

**Physical therapist Caroline Woodard is trained and certified in the Fall Stop … MOVE STRONG program that helps older adults lower their risk of falling by strengthening their muscles and balance.**

She makes sure to provide individualized attention to each person in her class.

"She's very kind, very thorough, and when she saw that someone was struggling she would say, OK, that one's not for you, let me show you something else," Gronda said.

"It's a very worthwhile program, especially for seniors to take, because there are so many good suggestions."

Woodard teaches FSMS in surrounding towns and now teaches at the Griffith Academy at 275 Main St., Old Wethersfield, every Thursday morning from 10:30-11:30 a.m. She hopes that with increased interest she can add more classes to her roster and prevent more potential falls.

"I just want to see older people be able to stay active and not lose anything that they love to do," she said.

"Falling is not a normal part of aging. All those aging processes can be slowed down by a good exercise program with cardiovascular, weight training and balance." **WL**

*For more information contact Caroline Woodard at 860-659-1496 or visit fallstop.net.*

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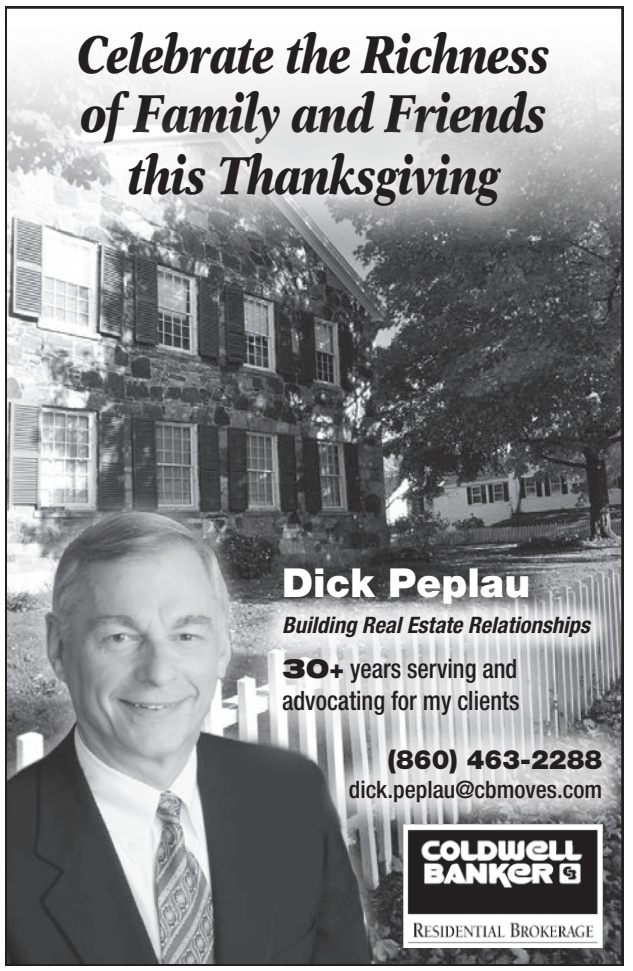


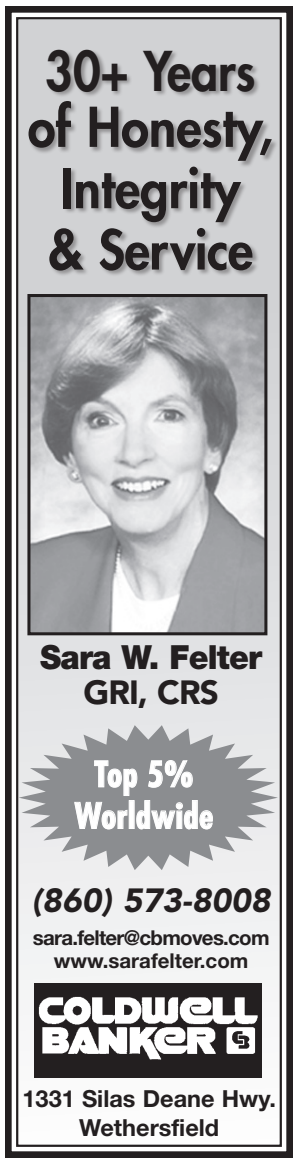


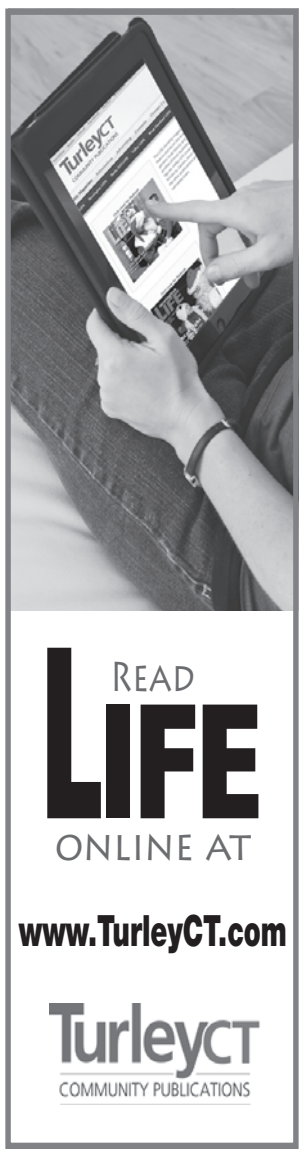



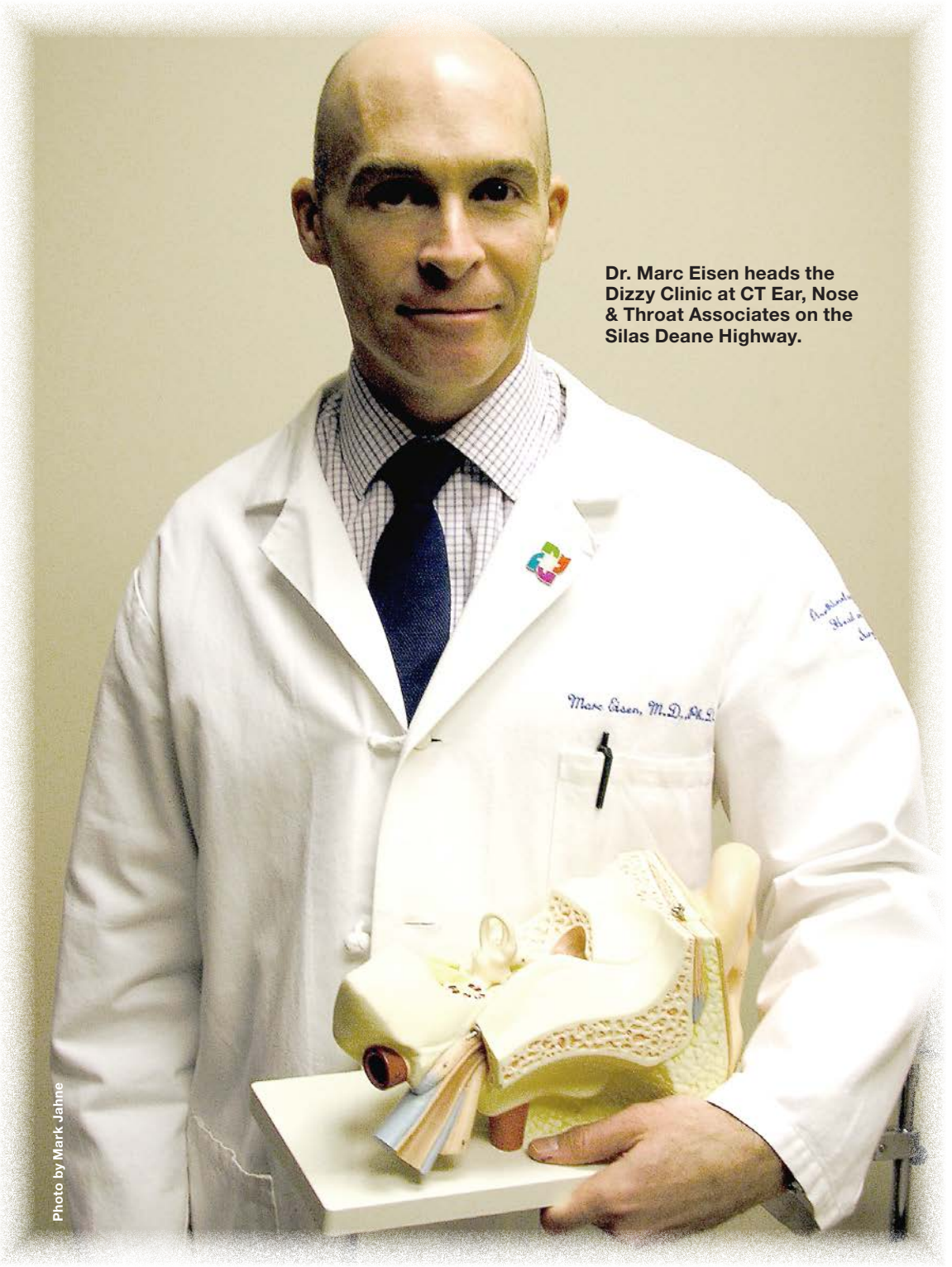


# Feeling dizzy?

## Newly opened health clinic can restore equilibrium

**by Mark Jahne**
*Editor*

Dizziness can be caused by many different things. Dr. Marc Eisen's specialty is to identify the cause and enact a specific treatment program to make the world stop spinning.

Eisen is part of the Connecticut Ear, Nose & Throat Associates office that recently opened at 988 Silas Deane Highway. The medical practice is affiliated with Hartford Hospital.

He is the one member of the staff who runs what is called the Dizzy Clinic within the practice. The other physicians are ENT specialists.

"I'm also the medical director of the Hartford Hospital Hearing Imbalance Center. I'm a subspecialist. I only treat ear problems," Eisen said. "Once you sub-specialize, you're more efficient."

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**"It's a very narrow niche, but there are a lot of people coming through."**

**– Dr. Marc Eisen**

His subspecialty is called neurotology. He deals with such medical issues as hearing disorders, ear infections, tumors, implantable hearing devices like cochlear implants and more.

He earned degrees from Northwestern University and the University of Pennsylvania.

Eisen said millions of Americans experience dizziness. Those who come to his office will be treated not just by him, but by a team of health care professionals including a doctor of audiology and a physical therapist.

"They see the whole team and they leave with a diagnosis and treatment plan," he said.

Dizziness breaks down into three basic categories: disequilibrium, light-headedness and vertigo, which occurs when inner ear crystals become dislodged. Eisen and his team look at both hearing and balance function as part of their analysis.

"We ask a lot of questions and have a bunch of tests," he said.

Most of the patients have already seen one or more other doctors. Dizziness is usually not life threatening but it does create a lot of limitations on the person who is affected by it.

Causes of this condition include low blood sugar, heart problems, medication issues, ear problems and migraine headaches.

"We have the experience and we have the testing. We have a true advantage," he said. "Part of the Dizzy Clinic is to send patients on to the next step in their treatment. I work very closely with Hartford HealthCare Rehab."

He specializes in tumors around the ear and between the ear and brain. Eisen works in partnership with a neurosurgeon to treat these growths. He said general balance disorders are most prevalent in the elderly and are the number-one cause of falls, a leading source of injury in older people.

"We're really busy. Fall prevention is one of our goals," he said. "A lot of people who have hearing loss either don't think they have it or don't seek medical attention."

The practice moved to town in late summer from its prior location in Hartford, gaining an additional 6,000 square feet of office space in the process. Ninety-five percent of the people they see are new patients.

He stressed the importance of the tests his clinic can offer as well as the fact that treatment of dizziness can prevent more significant health problems.

"It's a very narrow niche, but there are a lot of people coming through," Eisen said. **WL**

*Connecticut Ear, Nose & Throat Associates can be reached at 860-493-1950 or ctent.net. Its other offices are located in Enfield, Hartford and West Hartford.*

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# A comforting guide

## Daniel Warriner serves others through his hospice work

**by Mark Jahne**
*Editor*

People nearing the end of their lives have a wide variety of medical needs, but there are spiritual and emotional needs, too, for both them and their families. That's where the Rev. Daniel Warriner comes in.

Warriner, 34, grew up in Wethersfield – where his father is a retired police officer – and now calls Rocky Hill home. He is employed as the spiritual care coordinator with Masonicare Partners Home Health & Hospice.

"My father was a strong fatherly influence on me," the soft-spoken clergyman said.

He graduated from Wethersfield High School, where he played football and other sports, then earned a major in physics and a minor in astronomy from Central Connecticut State University. Along the way, he said he began to think about the greater implications of "what" and "why" in his life.

"About halfway through college, I became a Christian," Warriner said.

That was part of his journey of wrestling for the greater meaning in life. He attended services at the First Church of Christ in Wethersfield then; he now worships at the Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church.

"I got married right before I went to seminary," he added.

He attended the Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, a nondenominational school near Boston. During that time, his grandfather became seriously ill and Warriner went to see him. He held the elderly man's hand and offered him his love.

"In those moments, my faith felt very real," he said.

He led his college ministry program while at CCSU, which led to an interest in chaplaincy. He later took special training for that. He was ordained within the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference Feb. 9, 2014.

Warriner then joined Masonicare, where his original goal was to become a hospital chaplain.

"Even early on in my chaplaincy I focused on elder care," he said.

His frustration is that, while hospice is designed to serve as a multiple-month program to prepare the patient and family medically, spiritually, emotionally and otherwise for the pending death, most patients enter the program

**"I see myself as a companion for their journey."**
**– Rev. Daniel Warriner**

**The Rev. Daniel Warriner is spiritual care coordinator with Masonicare Partners Home Health & Hospice.**

photo by Mark Jahne

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with only a few days or weeks left in their lives.

"The average length of stay in hospice in Connecticut is two weeks, the worst in the United States," Warriner said.

Masonicare partners with St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford and he works one day each week at the hospital.

"We work with the palliative care staff at the hospital. We go wherever people are. We're very home-care oriented," he said. "I'm passionate about ministry."

Palliative care by definition is medical care that relieves pain, symptoms and stress caused by a serious illness.

Warriner and the Masonicare team minister to people of all faiths and also those with no faith. He does not promote his personal denomination to any of his patients. He said his patients often want to talk about religion, dreams, family and more.

The family piece is important because he must help them to deal with the eventual loss of a loved one. Bereavement counseling is part of the program.

"A family is like a mobile in a child's room, and a terminal illness diagnosis changes that. Somebody's not going to be there anymore," he said. "Dealing with people who are dying has a way of making you think of how you will die."

In addition to Warriner, the Masonicare team consists of a nurse, social worker, massage and Reiki therapists, a dietician and a music therapist. They work together as an interdisciplinary group.

Warriner said when he first meets a patient, he asks if that person wants his care. If the answer is no, he respects that and moves on. He doesn't force himself into the situation.

"Can I come by and see you? Would you like a visit?" is how he approaches each person.

In order to qualify for hospice care, a patient must have a terminal diagnosis and be expected to die within the next six months. He or she receives palliative care throughout that final journey.

"How can we give them quality for the time they have left?" Warriner asked. "How can we give somebody the most amount of comfort and quality in the days they have remaining? I see myself as a companion for their journey."

The answer to those questions can involve prayer. Music may be the answer, or it may be something as simple as holding the person's hand.

"The beauty of spiritual care is that I try to care for the whole person. There are beautiful healings that take place," he said. "This journey is not one I ever expected. God drew me here in a very natural and organic way."

Colleague Marie Roman spoke favorably about Warriner and his work. She is the counseling and social work supervisor for Masonicare Partners Home Health & Hospice.

"The patients and the families all feel that he is amenable to where they are at," she said. "He's really able to identify what the patient and the family needs."

She has never received a complaint about his work and said that stands out as unusual. Roman praised him for helping to bring an ethics component to the agency. **WL**

"People told us we were too young to move here, but we absolutely love it."

*Carol Simpson, Resident*

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# People notes

**1. Kirby O'Keefe,** senior captain of the Siena College women's soccer team, was named a College Sports Information Directors of America Academic All-District 1 First Team selection.

**Stephanie Bordeaux, Jaclyn O'Keefe, Janet Tedone, Michelle Tremblay, Derek Bylina** and **Elizabeth Phillips** were named to the president's list at Goodwin College.

**Christa Allard, Danielle Benoit, Tiare Burney, Marcie Campanello, Elizabeth Christ, Dustin Ganci, Galina Melnik, Taylor Ryan, Jessica Sasseville, Amber Sprague, Samantha Taylor, Victoria Zigmont** and **Jonathan Gwara** were named to the dean's list at Goodwin College.

**Kassandrah Banks** of Wethersfield, a member of the cross-country team at Eastern Connecticut State University, volunteered her time at the Hartford Marathon Oct. 10. She served as a course marshal, assisting blind athletes and those racing in the wheelchair division.

**Renee DiNino** was named to the board of End Hunger Connecticut. She is the mid-day host on the River 105.9 and the director of community affairs for iHeartMedia Communities Connecticut.

**Daniel P. Murray** received the Alfred & Marian LaRiviere Merit Award during convocation at Western New England University. This is given to sophomore members of Alpha Lambda Delta with the highest grade point average at the end of the spring 2015 semester and who intend to return to the university the following year.

**Nicole Varca** and the rest of the Emmanuel College women's cross-country team took home the Great Northeast Athletic Conference championship, their second in the last three years. **WL**

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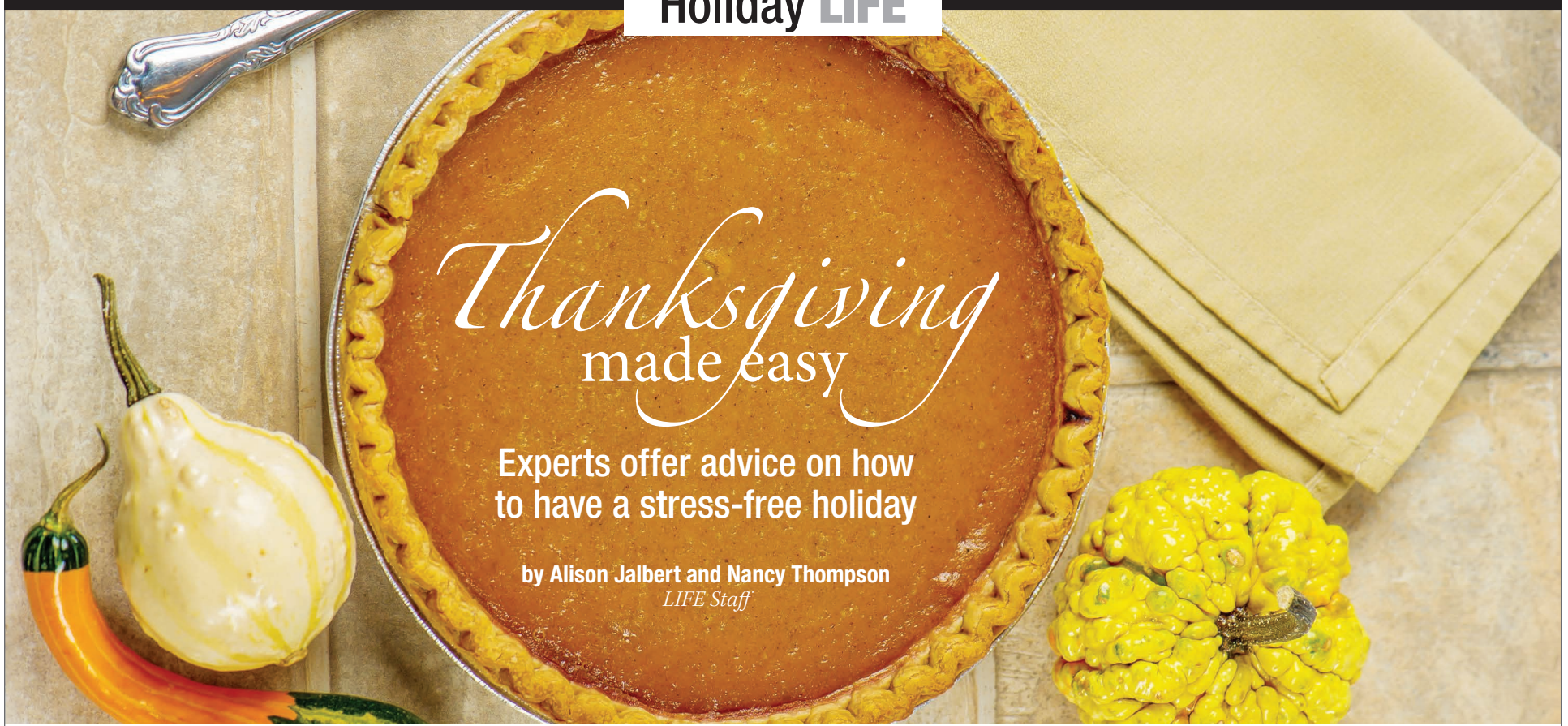

# Thanksgiving made easy

## Experts offer advice on how to have a stress-free holiday

by Alison Jalbert and Nancy Thompson
*LIFE Staff*

Thanksgiving sounds like a simple holiday – gather with loved ones to share a meal and express what everyone is thankful for.

Unless you live in a Norman Rockwell painting, it's not always that easy. Whether it's finding dishes to feed vegetarians, figuring out what to buy versus cook, or dealing with frustrating family members, the holiday often comes with stressors, making the day of thanks seem more like a day of terror.

Area experts offer tips on how to make Thanksgiving as enjoyable


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and relaxing as it should – and could – be.

## Satisfying vegetarian eaters

Thanksgiving is the holiday for which turkey is the star. But what if you have vegetarians at your table?

Les Harris, a chef and the owner of EZSTREATS, a gourmet food truck and catering service, offered a few suggestions for vegetarian dishes that everyone will enjoy.

For an appetizer, Harris suggested a cold burrata purée with a basil/tomato confite finished with a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil and saba.

Sounds good, but what is burrata? And what is saba?

Burrata, which is one of this year's hot items, is a ball made from mozzarella with a cream center. The word means butter, a reflection of its milky, buttery flavor. It's available at specialty cheese shops and gourmet markets. Saba is an ancient condiment that's getting renewed interest among chefs and gourmets. The thick syrup is the main ingredient in traditional balsamic vinegar, but it's less expensive because it isn't aged.

Harris also suggested three dishes as an entrée – acorn squash stuffed with onions, walnuts, sunflower seeds, celery, raisins and cheddar or goat cheese; grilled asparagus with garlic and panko breadcrumbs; and roasted Brussels sprouts.

The Brussels sprouts are seared and browned in a combination of extra virgin olive oil, salt, pepper, diced onion, crushed garlic and butter, then mixed with walnuts, vegetable stock and cranberries.

## Make it or buy it?

Louise Albin, owner of Café Louise Catering in West Hartford, believes that, since Thanksgiving is a celebration of food and giving thanks, everything should be prepared from scratch. She understands that people can be too busy to do that, however, and encourages people to take advantage of caterers or grocery stores that offer Thanksgiving menus.

"We do everything from brining the turkeys," she said. "One of our best-sellers is gravy. Some people don't like making gravy, or they feel insecure about it."

Many people think stuffing is difficult to make, and Albin said that makes them gravitate toward Stove Top stuffing. Making stuffing is "actually quite simple," yet it's another popular item at Café Louise.

For things such as horsd'oeuvres or breads, she encourages people to buy those. There's also a certain can-shaped dish many people prefer over a homemade option.

"One thing I have found both personally as well as over the years, is my husband would much rather have jellied cranberry sauce out of the can versus a cranberry chutney that we make from scratch," she said.

People can make mashed potatoes at home, as well as sweet potatoes, whether it's something as simple as baking them with interesting butter or mashing them.

"You can start doing things days in advance, and it's fine. Sweet potato casserole, turnip casserole and mashed potatoes can be made a few days in advance and warmed up in the oven," Albin said.

"People have it in their heads that they have to be doing everything last minute with pots and pans piled high to the sky."

## Creative leftovers

Then there's the question of what to do with all those leftovers, vegetarian or otherwise.

Harris suggested using mashed potatoes for potato pancakes or as the topping for shepherd's pie.

The turkey carcass can be simmered for stock to be used in soup and other dishes, and leftover turkey meat can be used in sandwiches and tetrazzini and ground for burgers, meatballs or meatloaf.

Albin said if the turkey is organic, making a bone broth out of its carcass is "really healthy." Leftover turkey can also be used in pot pie and turkey Bolognese.

She said many side dishes, like potatoes, can be frozen, which saves people from feeling like they need to eat the same foods in different combinations for the next few days.

"If I had a really big turkey, I'll freeze some of the turkey meat and use it in stews or soups," Albin explained. "In the wintertime, I love doing turkey soup and freezing it by the quart."

If people are still feeling stymied by what to do with leftovers, she encourages them to turn to the Internet.

## Staying sane with frustrating family members

Frustrating family members often are a major cause of stress at Thanksgiving and throughout the holiday season, when it's easy for a casual comment or action to escalate into a spirit-dampening situation.

Donna Morrison, a licensed clinical social worker with offices in Wethersfield and West Hartford, said knowing how to communicate effectively can help deal with frustrating family members and other guests.

Morrison suggested focusing on clear, calm communication, and doing it before frustration and stress can build. She likes what she calls "I statements" to express frustrations. For example, instead of saying, "You never help me with anything around here," it's better to say, "I feel upset that I don't get any help."

Some holiday stress comes from overdoing. Morrison suggested setting calm limits by saying "I can help you with _ on _" instead of volunteering to do more than is realistic. **WL**

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# ‘To make them feel good, at least for one day’

## Volunteers make holiday meals special

**by Mara Dresner**
*Staff Writer*

For most people, spending the holidays with family or friends is a given. Thanks to volunteers, even those undergoing challenging times have the opportunity to enjoy a special meal on Christmas and Thanksgiving.

Each year, Hands On Hartford offers a Thanksgiving meal at Christ Church Cathedral and a Christmas meal at South Congregational Church, both in Hartford.

One of the first people a guest sees at the meals is longtime volunteer Phil Knecht of Wethersfield.

“I’m like a maître d’ in a restaurant. I try to make them feel welcome,” said Knecht, who turned 87 in November and volunteers for

For those who volunteer serving up holiday meals, their efforts are about much more than putting food on the table.

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wine baskets

# Holiday LIFE

Hands On Hartford year-round. "It's [about] meeting people that need help and giving them a day to enjoy. I particularly feel very sad when I see children coming to the [Thanksgiving] breakfast."

Many of the Hands On Hartford volunteers have been participating for years, such as Don Goodman of Canton, who's been volunteering for about 20 years.

"I'd heard about the Thanksgiving meal and decided to show up and see if I can help. I didn't know what to bring. I'd never been to a soup kitchen. I brought a whipped cream pie. I wasn't thinking to put it in slices, to put it on plates. It was exactly the wrong type of pie to buy. I started learning a lot from my first trip," said Goodman, who has served on nonprofit boards.

Since then, he has been a sponsor for the Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter meals that Hands On Hartford organizes and hosts for homeless and low-income working individuals and families.

Each year, Goodman said he's tried to find ways to make the meal better.

"One year, a friend of mine gave me some salads. I thought, 'My God, they've never had salad.' For the past 15 years, they've had salads. I like iced tea but I also like soda, so now we have an entire soda bar. Little by little, we've added different things. We've added candy; we started putting out bowls of fresh fruit," he said.

Several years ago, they added packaged treats, such as Ring Dings and Twinkies, and now give away about 1,000 at the meal.

They've also added bags of chips and popcorn for the guests to take home. Last year, 278 guests enjoyed the Christmas Day meal, each leaving with a gift bag.

Goodman and his family coordinate with Chef Kim Bunton to provide side dishes and extras, and also bring volunteers to the events. He credits his wife, Annie Kelleher, for her assistance with the preparation.

"We prepare veggies for 250 people. Annie has helped me do the shopping. She helps me do the prep. She gets up at 2 in the morning to help me prep the vegetables. She came up with one of the favorites, candied yams with cherries. I couldn't have done it without her help and her support. It doesn't happen without her contribution," said Goodman, who also brought his children to volunteer at the meals, starting when they were young. They're now adults and have been volunteering for 19 years in a row.

**"Over 60 to 70 major holidays, I've never seen any people get into arguments. I've never seen any sort of dispute. I've never seen any sort of conflict during any of our holiday meals. People genuinely try to be nice to the people next to them."**

**– Don Goodman**

"I have been very thankful to have my kids participate. I have always believed in trying to make the world a better place, in loving our brothers and our sisters. I am endlessly grateful for the opportunity I had to participate. I think I've had much more than I've given over the years," said Goodman, who is a financial advisor with Wells Fargo and splits his time between Connecticut and Hawaii.

"I grew up in the ghetto of Brooklyn. My mom was a single mom. We lived in a tenement; there were rats, roaches and we never had enough food. I was always very influenced by my upbringing. This is a way of giving thanks for the good fortune that's come to me."

Goodman said he's been surprised by how big the crowds have gotten through the years.

One thing that hasn't changed, though, is the kindness that people show one another.

"Over 60 to 70 major holidays, I've never seen any people get into arguments. I've never seen any sort of dispute. I've never seen any sort of conflict during any of our holiday meals. People genuinely try to be nice to the people next to them. It's a warm family environment where everyone tries to care for other people," he said. "Every year, we try to make the holiday better than the one before."

Knecht has a simple goal for everyone he meets at the meals: "To make them feel good, at least for one day," Knecht said. "It gives them hope that tomorrow will be a better day."

For more information visit handsonhartford.org or email info@handsonhartford.org. **WL**

*Hands On Hartford is a human services agency focused on support to the Hartford community in the areas of food, housing and economic security, while providing meaningful volunteer opportunities.*

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# Events spotlight

## Night of Joy! Christmas Concert

*Dec. 11-13*

Kick off the Christmas season with an evening of joy at the Night of Joy! Christmas Concerts at Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church. This year's concert features many of the church's best in-house musicians including soloists, the WEFC band, as well as adult and kids choirs. Music is performed in a variety of styles from pop to gospel, classical to jazz and includes familiar Christmas carols as well as newer songs of the season. The evening is topped off with a reception complete with delicious holiday treats. Concerts are Friday, Dec. 11 at 7 p.m.; Saturday, Dec. 12 at 4 and 7 p.m.; and Sunday, Dec. 13 at 4 p.m. at Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church, 511 Maple St. (Route 3 on the curve). Admission is free; however, tickets are required as space is limited. Call 860-563-8286 or register at www.wethefc.com?utm_source=email&utm_medium=email. To help friends and neighbors in need this winter, the church will be accepting monetary donations for its Hands Open Wide food pantry at the reception.

## Griswoldville Chapel Annual Holiday Worship Service

*Saturday, Dec. 12*

On Saturday Dec. 12 at 3 p.m., the Griswoldville Chapel will host the Annual Worship Service. The worship committee has invited Rev. Walsh to welcome and lead the service. This event has attracted a large number of attendees, who look forward to getting together to keep the tradition of the chapel going. The chapel was built to serve the Griswoldville residents as a place of worship, because it was too far to go to the center of town by horse and buggy over dirt roads. Come and meet neighbors and friends at this short, traditional service. Coffee and sweets will be served along with the traditional sing-a-long.

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**"Merry Old Santa" is one of the illustrations by Thomas Nast, the man whose published art first popularized Christmas in America.**

# Merry and bright

## Party and museum tours celebrate centuries of Christmas in America

**by Mark Jahne**
*Editor*

The Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum is offering people an opportunity to get into the holiday spirit while at the same time showcasing Christmas decorating and customs from the colonial days.

It also seeks to educate people about how Christmas as we know it today evolved from a time when it was a comparatively low-key event.

With that in mind, the museum's three historic houses will be closed for the first 10 days of December in order to get them ready for the WDS Holiday Preview Party scheduled from 5-8 p.m. Dec. 11. Guests will be treated to a candlelight preview of the holiday decorations throughout the museum and stroll from house to house while enjoying food, wine, ale and live holiday music.

There will also be the opportunity to chat with Mr. and Mrs. Silas Deane, Mrs. Claus and guides in period dress. Admission is $25 at the door.

"Three Centuries of Christmas" evening candlelight tours of the three houses – featuring guides in period dress sharing the history of Christmas and New Year's Day – take place from 5-8 p.m. Dec. 18-19. Daylight "Three Centuries of Christmas" tours will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturdays and 1 to 4 p.m. Sundays from Dec. 12 to Jan. 3.

Admission is $12 for adults, $10 for senior citizens, $6 for students/children, or $28 per family (two adults, two children).

"Three Centuries of Christmas" begins

**"Christmas as we know it today really didn't happen until the late 19th century."**

**–Charles Lyle**

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# Holiday LIFE

Wreaths and roping decorate the outside of the museum.

This portion of the exhibit traces the origins of Santa Claus.

in the Silas Deane House, circa 1770, where New Year's Day was the main holiday, not Christmas, due to the puritanical customs that lingered in New England.

The house reflects the preparations for the family's "New Years' Day Calling," when prominent gentlemen would call on the lady of the household.

It was also the day when individuals who owed the family money would meet privately with the master of the house to settle their debts or make a New Year's resolution to provide goods or services to settle their accounts in the coming year.

The Isaac Stevens House is decorated to depict the holiday celebrations of a middle-class household during the early to mid-1800s, when many of the Christmas traditions known today were adopted in New England. The "best" parlor features a table-top tree decorated with candles, gilded eggshells and edible treats, in keeping with the era.

The Stevens House includes a

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special exhibit with enlarged color illustrations by Thomas Nast from the museum's rare 1888 copy of Clement Moore's "An Account of a Visit of St. Nicholas." The colorful images tell the tale of how the secular aspect of Christmas was created in the early 19th century, which coincides with the museum's interpretation of Christmas at the Stevens House.

At the Joseph Webb House, guests will see decorations typical of the early 20th century, a period of stunning decoration and celebration. The home is prepared for a Christmas open house that was typical of the times, including a dessert buffet set up in the dining parlor.

The culmination of several weeks' work, the lavishness of the dessert and decorations could make or break the reputation of the hostess. Decorations include three Christmas trees, evergreen roping, fresh greens, fruit, and a collection of period ornaments.

Also featured are a collection of antique iron toys from the late 19th and early 20th centuries and a Victorian doll house.

"We did Christmas last year, but we gave the party a rest for one year," said WDS Executive Director Charles Lyle. "People missed the party. It's a lot of fun."

He likes the idea of the museum focusing on the history of the holidays.

"Seven or eight years ago we started decorating for the holidays in a big way and an intelligent way. The three homes are all interpreted differently. Christmas as we know it today really didn't happen until the late 19th century," Lyle said.

The exhibits at the Stevens House are designed to teach visitors about what he called the start of the commercialization of Christmas. The Thomas Nast illustrations were the first widely published drawings that publicized the holiday.

"We transformed one of the rooms on the second floor into an exhibit gallery," he said.

Lyle said Nash also created the image of Santa's workshop at the North Pole.

"It's been fun. We tried to take

Those who take the Christmas candlelight tour will see these Colonial style tree ornaments

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# Holiday LIFE

**Famed illustrator Thomas Nast (above, right) created the above work of Santa and his reindeer.**

both Thanksgiving and Christmas and have special activities to bring people into the museum. I don't know anyone else who has done an exhibit on celebrating the origins of Santa Claus," he added.

Period music and carols will be sung outside the houses. Admission to the tour is $30 per person. **WL**

*The Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum is located at 211 Main St. For more information visit webb-deane-stevensmuseum.org or call 860-529-0612.*


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Holiday LIFE

# Pickles on the tree and church at 4 a.m.

## Christmas traditions from the old country remain a part of locals lives

**by Mark Jahne**
*LIFE Staff*

Erwin and Helga Schramma were a young married couple in the years following World War II. They could not return to their homes because that part of Germany was added to Poland.

They also didn't want to live under Communist rule, so they moved to Dusseldorf, West Germany, filing an application with a refugee resettlement program run by the National Council of Churches to immigrate to America.

Their application was approved in 1956 and, with a 5-week-old baby girl in tow, they set off for the New World. They left behind family and friends, but one thing they brought with them was their holiday traditions.

"Both of my parents grew up in East Prussia. They both had large farmsteads," said Petra Jenkinson, their daughter, who was the little baby at that time.

The Schrammas spoke no English. All they knew was that they had to take a train to Hartford where representatives of the Brotherhood of St. Andrew would greet them and take them to an apartment in Farmington, the town where they still live.

Erwin, who recently turned 93, recalled how the area was already decorated for the holidays.

Over time, they learned English as well as U.S. history, and qualified to become U.S. citizens.

Helga joined the Hartford Saengerbund, a German-American singing society, in 1969. Erwin followed some time later, and now they sing with their daughter in its chorus.

Christmas trees, or weihnachtsbaum, are also part of German tradition. They are decorated with glass ornaments and "lametta," which means tinsel. The popular Christmas song "O Tannenbaum" is a German tune about a Christmas tree.

They said trees used in German homes are of a different type than those in New England, with larger and thicker branches. Traditionalists use candles attached to those branches with large clips. They are not lit for fire safety reasons.

Another common tradition is the weihnactspyramid, candles on a rotating wheel that makes dinging sounds when the candles are lit.

One of the more unique practices is to hide a pickle amid all the tinsel and ornaments on the tree. Anyone who finds it receives a small gift. Jenkinson maintains this tradition with her husband and children.

"We listen to a lot of old, traditional Christmas songs. We have a very strong music tradition in this family," she said.

Jenkinson plays mandolin and zither. Helga said when her children were little, they had to either recite a poem or sing a song for the holidays.

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# Holiday LIFE

Courtesy photo

**The Monasterial family of Wethersfield consists of, from left, Alberto, Amy, and their children Abby and Amiel. They share some of the Christmas traditions of their native Philippines.**

Ornaments are sometimes edible as well as decorative, such as chocolates that hang from the branches by string. Sparklers are also hung on the tree, then removed for the children to light and enjoy outdoors.

The bunten teller is a special colored plate on which cookies, nuts, candies, oranges and apples are displayed. These are often given to children. Advent wreaths grace the table, and lights are placed in the windows.

"I still decorate my house for Advent," Helga said. "That's when I change my house [for the holidays]."

St. Nicholas Day is celebrated Dec. 6. Children put out clean shoes in hopes they will be filled with candy, nuts and fruit if they were good. In the tradition of many European countries, the Christmas season does not end until Jan. 6 – Three Kings Day.

The Schrammas always attend the 4 p.m. Christmas Eve service at St. James Church in Farmington, followed by Heiliger Abend, Christmas Eve dinner. In German tradition, Santa Claus does not come down the chimney. St. Nicholas knocks on the door and the children get to see him and receive their gifts.

Amy and Alberto Monasterial came to this country from the Philippines in 1998. They and their children Abby and Amiel are Roman Catholics and live in Wethersfield.

The couple grew up in the same town, General Tinio, located in the Nuevo Ecija province on the island of Luzon. The opportunity for a computer job with Aetna drew them to the Hartford area. They already spoke English as well as the official Philippine language, Tagalog.

Those who think the American Christmas season starts too soon just make the Monasterials smile. It's a huge deal in their native land that can last four months or longer.

The season kicks off in September and does not end until the aforementioned Three Kings Day in early January.

September is also when Christmas carols start popping up on the radio, in both languages. American-style natural evergreen trees don't grow in that climate, so artificial trees are used instead. The most popular decorative item is the lantern. "Every house has a Christmas lantern that we actually make," Amy said.

They brought that tradition with them to the United States, but now the lanterns are store bought. Religious observance is another important aspect of the holiday in the Philippines.

She explained that Catholics attend church nine mornings in a row leading up to Christmas. These services are called the Mass of the Rooster because they are held at the same time the rooster begins to crow – 4 a.m.

Everybody from the town or village attends, and if you don't arrive on time, the pews are full and you must stand outside and listen to the proceedings on speakers.

Alberto said it is a highlight of the year because one gets to see family, friends, neighbors and others who all return to town for this period of religious and cultural observance.

Most people take off the week leading up to Christmas as vacation time. Tradition states that attending all nine of these Masses will guarantee that one's wishes will be granted.

"It's really fun. All the townspeople are in the church. Vendors are outside making rice cakes," Alberto said.

Amy said not only do people go to these Masses, but they also wear their best attire. Clothing and shoes are common gifts that parents give their children. Her husband said he misses this tradition the most.

He added Christmas Eve is when families have their big holiday feast. This is served after attending church. The typical meal is a ham dinner. Other favorite items are rice noodles, cheese balls, fruit salad and barbecue meat on a stick.

Although not usually served for Christmas, another popular meal served for various celebrations is spaghetti. It is served in a tomato sauce with ground pork or beef.

What makes this dish distinctly Filipino is that sliced hot dogs and sliced hard-boiled eggs are placed on top of the pasta. These are then flavored with catsup made from bananas, not tomatoes.

"We believe in Santa Claus, too," Amy said. "We hang our sacks close to the door because we don't have chimneys."

Historically, Santa was more likely to bring them money than toys or games. But these days he is just as likely to bring them gifts and gadgets, she said.

Children sing carols in school, and neighbors go from house to house offering the season's greetings. They also sing carols, which can be done as a fundraiser for charity.

Another part of the tradition is that children treat all senior citizens as grandparents. Amy said if someone comes calling at your house, you give him or her a small gift or something to eat, even if they are complete strangers.

Everyone is prepared to give gifts to their friends and neighbors as well as their relatives, she added.

"When you grow up, there are different stages and different experiences of the holidays," Amy said. **WL**

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# December *calendar*

| Su | Mo | Tu | We | Th | Fr | Sa |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |

*Is your club, community organization, school or house of worship holding an event open to the general public? If so, please send us the details for inclusion in our calendar. Email your events to Mark Jahne at mjahne@turleyct.com or mail them to Turley CT Community Publications, 540 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070.*

**3** **Holidays on Main,** 5-8 p.m., Main Street, center of Old Wethersfield

**11** **Night of Joy Christmas Concert,** 7 p.m., Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church, 511 Maple St., 860-563-8286, also 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. Dec. 12 and 4 p.m. Dec. 13

**12** **Second Saturday Cinema, "Bachelor Mother,"** 1:30 p.m., Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2811 or wethersfieldlibrary.org

**Annual Worship Service,** 3 p.m., Griswoldville Chapel, 176 Griswold Road, 860-529-0900

**150 Prospect Coffeehouse,** 6:30 p.m., Wethersfield United Methodist Church, 150 Prospect St., 860-614-5158 or tanjam@comcast.net

**14** **Chocolate Workshop,** 3:30 p.m., for grades 7-12, registration required, Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2811 or wethersfieldlibrary.org

**15** **Film "The Age of Adaline,"** 6:15 p.m., Wethersfield Library, 515 Silas Deane Highway, 860-257-2811 or wethersfieldlibrary.org

**22** **GFWC Newington/ Wethersfield Woman's Club,** 6 p.m., Newington Senior & Disabled Center, 120 Cedar St., Newington, 860-666-4371

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# Church volunteers 'Radiate' love

## Roll up sleeves at city schools

More than 200 members, friends and family members connected to the First Church of Christ in Wethersfield, Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church, CenterPoint Community Church and NewLife Christian Fellowship – all located in town – spent an entire day recently at a Radiate project in the North End of Hartford.

The volunteers performed landscaping, painting, repairs and cleanup at Dr. Martin Luther King School and Simpson-Waverly School. They were assisted by principals and PTO parents from the two schools.

These four churches join forces every year on the weekend before Labor Day for a joint worship service and a separate community outreach effort. In 2014, volunteers spent the day cleaning up Mill Woods Park in town.

This year's project was performed alongside Urban Alliance, a Hartford non-profit organization that creates opportunities for people to achieve lasting change in their lives.

**1.** More than a dozen volunteers used a rototiller, picks and shovels to dig up the lawn in front of the main entrance to Dr. Martin Luther King School. They planted an arrangement of shade-friendly plants and shrubs.
**2.** Laurie Hart of Wethersfield led the effort to fill flower boxes on either side of the Dr. Martin Luther King School entrance with colorful annual plants.
**3.** The Rev. Todd Willard, youth pastor at First Church, is ready to greet arriving volunteers at Dr. Martin Luther King School.
**4.** Charles Floyd of Plainville and Joyce McNamara of Wethersfield used rollers to paint the walls of several classrooms at Simpson-Waverly School.
**5.** The entrance foyer, halls and main office at Simpson-Waverly School got a fresh coat of bright yellow paint. Christy Richenburg of Wethersfield and Derek Veenema of Rocky Hill wield their brushes.

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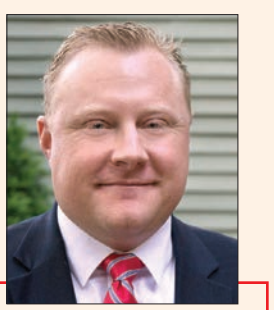
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# Events spotlight

## 15th Annual Wethersfield Antiques Show

Nov. 21, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
*Pitkin Community Center*
*30 Greenfield St.*
*860-529-7656 or*
*wethersfieldhistory.org*
The Wethersfield Historical Society brings in dealers displaying a wide range of early American and 19th century items. A gala cocktail preview party opens the show from 6:30-9 p.m. Nov. 20 at a cost of $35, or $55 for patrons. Admission to the main event on Saturday is $8 ($7 with a discount coupon or show card). New this year are verbal appraisals at a cost of $5 for one item, $8 for two and $10 for a maximum of three.

## Ye Olde Sugar Plum Fair

Nov. 21, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
*Trinity Episcopal Church*
*Parish Hall*
*300 Main St.*
*860-529-6825 or*
*trinityepiscopalweth.org*
Start the holiday season with an event featuring baked goods, handmade gifts, books, puzzles and tapes, gift baskets, Christmas crafts, Christmas collectibles and a food court.

## Holiday Bake Sale

Dec. 4-5
*St. George Greek*
*Orthodox Cathedral*
*433 Fairfield Ave.*
*860-667-2301 or 860-666-6778*
Go just across the town line into Hartford to find traditional Greek holiday fare such as baklava, koulouria, kourambiedes, kataifi and finikia. Also on sale will be spanakopita (spinach pie). Sale hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. All proceeds will benefit the cathedral.

## Night of Joy Christmas Concert

Dec. 11-13
*Wethersfield Evangelical*
*Free Church*
*511 Maple St.*
*860-563-8286*
This year's concert features many of the church's best in-house musicians including soloists, the WEFC band, adult and children's choirs. Music is performed in a variety of styles from pop to gospel, classical to jazz, and includes familiar carols as well as newer songs of the season. Concert times are 7 p.m. Friday, 4 and 7 p.m. Saturday and 4 p.m. Sunday. Admission is free, but tickets are required, as space is limited.

## Annual Worship Service

Dec. 12, 3 p.m.
*Griswoldville Chapel*
*176 Griswold Road*
*860-529-0900*
This historic 1872 chapel hosts its annual Christmas season worship gathering. This will be a short, traditional service followed by coffee and sweets and a sign-along. The chapel is available for rent for weddings, parties and meetings and was originally built because people in Griswoldville wanted a place to worship closer to home than the Congregational church in Old Wethersfield.


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# News roundup

## Democrats win election

Mayor Paul Montinieri led the way as the Democrats once again took a 5-4 majority on the Town Council in the municipal election held Nov. 3. Incumbent Democrats Deputy Mayor Steven Barry and Tony Martino, along with newcomers Anthony Spinella and Amy Morrin Bello, also won two-year terms.

The Republican minority consists of incumbents Michael Rell, Donna Hemmann and Michael Hurley. Jodi Latina, who previously served on the Board of Education, captured the fourth GOP council seat, bumping off incumbent Stathis Manousos.

All four Democrats on the ballot won seats on the Board of Education. Incumbents John Morris (four-year term) and Polly Moon (two-year term) are joined by newcomers Barbara "Bobbie" Granato (four years) and Kevin Hill (two years). Republicans Diane Fitzpatrick (four years) and Janet Vasel (two years) will also join the school board.

## Wethersfield is tops

According to wallethub.com, Wethersfield is the best small city in which to live in Connecticut. The basic criteria was a population of between 25,000 and 100,000. The town's population as listed in the 2010 U.S. Census is 26,668.

WalletHub used such criteria as affordability, economic health, education and health, and quality of life to determine its annual rankings. Although tops in Connecticut, Wethersfield came in 123rd on the national list of best small cities. In addition to the census data, WalletHub used information culled from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Areavibes, Yelp and its own research.

photos by Mark Jahne

## Friends hold book sale

**1.** The Friends of the Wethersfield Library held their fall book sale the weekend of Nov. 7-8. For the first time, a preview sale with a $5 admission fee was held on Thursday evening and drew a large number of early shoppers. Staffing the entry were event co-chairwomen Carolyn Vallieres, left, and Julie Konopka.

## D'Esopo plans food drive

The D'Esopo Funeral Chapel at 277 Folly Brook Blvd. will host its second annual Thanksgiving food drive to benefit Foodshare from 1-4 p.m. Nov. 21.

Turkeys, nonperishable food items and monetary donations are all welcome. Call 860-257-7635 or see foodshare.org for additional information.

## Dentists buy back candy

**2.** Drs. Brendan and Tom Dolan of Dolan Dental in Wethersfield hosted their second annual Halloween Candy Buy-back event Nov. 1. Children traded their extra Halloween candy for cash at a rate of $1 per pound.

The dentists will give all of those sweets to Operation Gratitude, an organization that sends thousands of packages to U.S. military personnel. The UPS Store of Wethersfield donated packing and shipping materials toward this cause.

In the photo, Dr. Brendan Dolan accepts a large container of candy from the O'Connell family.

## Club plants white oak

**3.** The grounds of the Solomon Welles House have a new addition. It's a Quercus alba, or white oak tree, donated by the Bud and Blossom Garden Club of Wethersfield. While just a sapling now, it will grow to be 60 to 100 feet tall and will provide food for many animals and birds that include acorns in their diets.

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The Bud and Blossom Garden Club is a member of the Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut, which chose the theme "Growing Together: Tiny Acorns to Mighty Oaks" for 2015-2017 and has encouraged all garden clubs in the state to plant native oaks.

Standing by the newly planted tree are, from left, Mary Young, Pat Pope, President Pat Mulrain and Tree Warden Corey Christians. The location was chosen to replace a large tree that had to be removed.

## A tale of three legs

Richard Lasher, the long-proclaimed honorary mayor of Griswoldville, contacted Wethersfield LIFE recently to share a unique story from the past. It's about a man named Francesco "Frank" Lentini whose family lived on Brimfield Road.

What made him unique was the fact that he grew up with three fully developed legs. Lasher remembers seeing Lentini play football and kick a field goal with that third leg. Each of his legs was of a different length.

The Wethersfield man was featured in a book called "Very Special People: The Struggles, Loves and Triumphs of Human Oddities," by Frederick Drimmer. He also worked in the side show of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus for many years.

According to thehumanmarvels.com, Lentini was born in 1889 in Sicily attached by the spine to a twin brother. They were separated and Francesco ended up with three legs, four feet (a malformed secondary foot was attached to his third leg), 16 toes and two sets of functioning genitalia.

He died at the age of 78 in 1966. Lentini married and fathered four healthy children. He was so respected among his peers that he was simply called "The King."

## CREC hosts STEM Night

**4.** The CREC Discovery Academy recently held STEM Night, an annual event that allows students and their families to explore science, technology, engineering and math. The event, held at the school's new facility on Cumberland Avenue, included presentations by the Connecticut Science Center, a school partner.

The center taught students in preschool through grade two about the chemical composition, light, color and aerodynamics of bubbles. Students in grades 3-6 learned about robots and interacted with the Quiz, a humanoid robot.

UConn engineering ambassadors worked on projects with students and CREC Discovery Academy teachers led families in science, technology, engineering and math activities. Four classrooms shared coding and interactive software on iPads and laptops. Students also built devices to protect eggs during an egg drop experiment.

## WHS 40th reunion

The Wethersfield High School Class of 1975 will hold its 40-year reunion at 6:30 p.m. Nov. 28 at Wethersfield Country Club. The cost is $45 per person. For further information email melmic@aol.com or call 860-716-0999.

## TD Bank supports food pantry

**6.** Residents and other customers of TD Bank brought their spare change to the bank for a community coin counting event and fundraiser in support of the Hands Open Wide Food Pantry housed at the Wethersfield Evangelical Free Church.

The donated funds were matched by the bank and the food pantry received a check for $4,067.78, enough to provide two months' of food for 50 families. Sharan Crabtree, left, accepts the check from Store Manager Lisa Dennis.

## Historical holiday activity

The Hurlbut-Dunham House at 212 Main St. is decorated for the holidays and will be open for free tours from 1-4 p.m. Dec. 5-6, Dec. 12-13 and Dec. 19-20. Keeney Kids Holiday History programs will be offered from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Dec. 29-30 at the Keeney Memorial Cultural Center, 200 Main St.

## Vacation at the library

Wethersfield Library Children's Services is offering a variety of programs during the December school vacation period. Children of all ages are invited to "Move and Groove with Mr. Gym" at 11 a.m. Dec. 28. Registration is required. Come back at 6 p.m. for a free showing of the movie "Minions."

The library welcomes children ages 7-12 to a "Paint Event with Artique" at 2 p.m. Dec. 29. The movie "Inside Out" will be shown at 6 p.m. Children of all ages are invited to ring in the new year with stories, dancing, crafts and a special New Year countdown starting at 11 a.m. Dec. 30.

## A lively party

**7.** Madres Latinas held an event at Temple Beth Torah to celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month. There were costumes, ethnic foods and this traditional circle dance.

## Library holiday closings

The Wethersfield Library will be closed Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. It will be open on New Year's Eve until 5 p.m. and closed on New Year's Day. WL

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LIFE *in the classroom*

# Who says mathematics can't be FUN?

**by Mark Jahne**
*Editor*

Math has gotten a bad rap over the years. It's rarely cited as a child's favorite subject in school and those who struggle with the numerical concepts are sometimes said to have "math anxiety."

The general sense is that it's important to learn, but it's just not fun.

The four elementary schools in town are taking steps to disprove that belief. One such example was a Family Math Night held Oct. 29 at Emerson-Williams School.

**Christen Sousa reads a book about math to her son, Emmett, a kindergarten student.**

An estimated 65 families and more than 110 children entered the school full of excitement over what they would experience that evening. Many of the activities were designed with parent-child participation in mind.

It's all part of the new Go Math curriculum adopted by the district. Parents were invited to attend a seminar explaining that curriculum in the upper media center while children explored the six stations set up in the cafeteria, classrooms and hallways.

Every student who entered the door received a "mathport" to help guide the way from one activity to the next. These documents were stamped at each stop.

**Haley Williams shows Principal Neela Thakur what she has learned at one of the fun math tables.**

photos by Mark Jahne

## "We're trying to show the kids and the parents that math can be really fun."

### – Neela Thakur

The six math stations were:
- operations and algebra
- numbers and operations
- measurement and data
- geometry
- technology
- math literature

"This is our first time doing this," a smiling Principal Neela Thakur said. "One of our school goals this year at Emerson-Williams is to find more ways to get parents involved in their child's education."

The whole idea of the event was to encourage families to explore different math concepts and activities.

"We're trying to show the kids and the parents that math can be really fun," Thakur said.

Students demonstrated for their parents how quickly they have picked up the necessary skills to adeptly use the Chromebooks that were available at the technology station. Teachers, tutors and paraprofessionals were present at many of the stations to explain how to perform the activities.

"This is great. The kids were very excited about coming here," parent Nilsa Burnell said.

Go Math is designed to help students interact with their lessons in new ways. They record their strategies, explanations and solutions, as well as practice and test preparation, in their books. There is also a technology piece that connects home and school. **WL**

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# Geared for SPEED

## Frank L'Etoile Jr. is at home behind a stock car steering wheel

**by Mark Jahne**
*Editor*

He races cars just as his father and grandfathers did before him. Frank L'Etoile Jr. is already a stock car champion at the tender age of 24.

The Wethersfield resident grew up in town and graduated from Wethersfield High School, where he pursued his other favorite sport, ice hockey.

He played all positions in his four years on the WHS squad, including goalie.

He won the Dare Stock championship this past year at Stafford Motor Speedway in Stafford Springs, where he races on Fridays, and has four wins there to his credit.

He also races go-karts and already has three championships under his belt in that field.

"I race go-karts in New York on the dirt," he said.

He has 20 wins and 68 top-five finishes in the Sr. Outlaw division including championships in 2008, 2009 and 2013. Another pair of wins and eight top-five finishes in only 10 races have occurred in the Flat Head Mod division at Lebanon Valley in New York.

His father Frank Sr. owns the stock car, a 1987 Chevrolet Monte Carlo. Frank Jr. favors a 1986 Oldsmobile Cutlass for his daily driving.

In addition to his father, members of the support crew are Aunt Deb Sullivan, John Sullivan, Gill Grismala, Roger Stiso, Bill Staves and Mike Procaccini.

Frank L'Etoile Jr. began racing go-karts in 2006 at the age of 15. His first year in the Dare Stock division of cars at Stafford was 2013. He has also competed at such places as Thompson Speedway, New London-Waterford Speed Bowl and Seekonk Speedway.

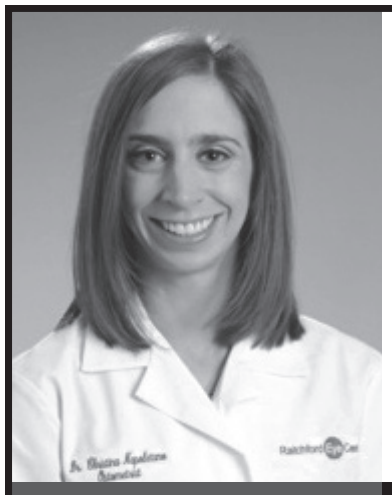
courtesy photos

**Frank L'Etoile Jr. is getting used to posing with his trophies in Victory Lane.**

"My grandpa drove race cars, my dad drove race cars, my other grandfather," the young man said.

"I have a picture of him as a baby in his dad's race car holding the steering wheel," Deb Sullivan said.

L'Etoile said he always had toy cars as a child. His father owned a chassis shop and he visited it often. It was the start of his education about automobiles and motor sports.

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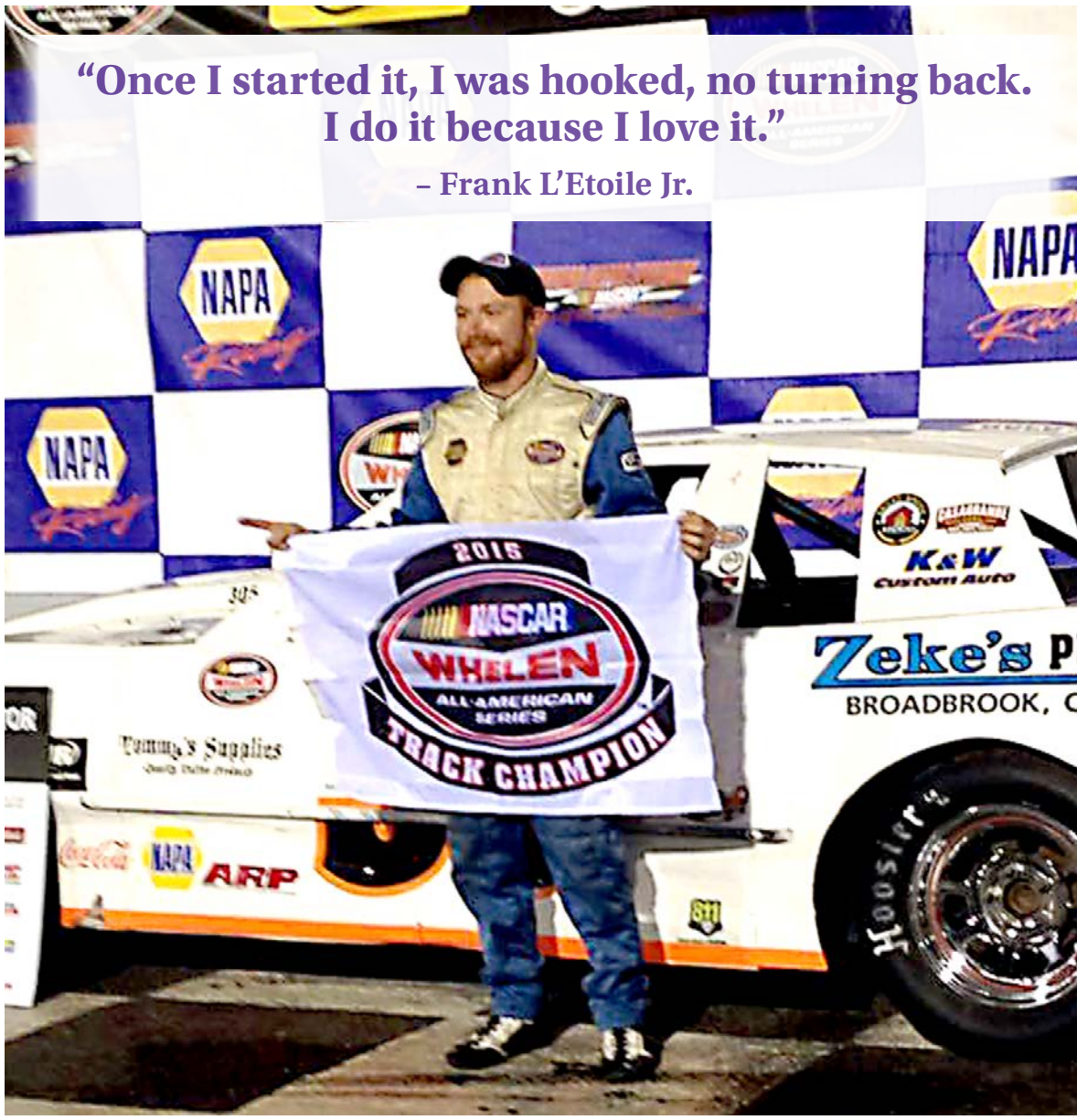
## LIFE Quotes

*If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude.*

*Maya Angelou*




**"Once I started it, I was hooked, no turning back. I do it because I love it."**

**– Frank L'Etoile Jr.**

**He may only be 24 years old, but Frank L'Etoile Jr. is already making a name for himself on the stock car and go-kart racing circuits.**

"I got a go-kart for my 13th birthday. Dad and I rebuilt it. Once I started it, I was hooked, no turning back," he said. "I do it because I love it."

Father and son still race go-karts together.

Deb Sullivan, who performs a variety of duties for FRL Motorsports, the company that sponsors the young man's racing endeavors, said the season starts in April and continues until October. That adds up to as many as 50 races per year.

"I've been going since I was 7. I met my husband at the race track. We're a racing family," she said.

"His dad builds a really good car," she added.

L'Etoile said he averages 95 to 100 miles per hour in his stock car. He would love to race professionally some day but right now he works in construction to pay the bills.

"I work to support this. Ninety percent of what I make goes into it, one way or another," he said.

He understand the dangers inherit to auto racing and practices all of the proper safety techniques. Thus far he has only experienced a few minor crashes.

He is a firm believer that his experiences on the track make him a better and more prepared driver in everyday life. He can trust other race drivers to do the right thing behind the wheel, but that is not always true of the general motoring public.

"It's scarier driving on these streets than on the race track," he said.

L'Etoile knows his competition and the trends of each of the other drivers. That helps with both strategy and safety.

He and his fellow racers curb their aggression somewhat because repairing damaged cars is an expensive proposition and they also don't want to make enemies on the track or get a reputation as being reckless operators.

"We're going to race in a touring division" next year, L'Etoile said.

That division competes in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine. It means he will have to upgrade the Monte Carlo's engine.

His first win was at Stafford but that is not necessarily the victory that stands out the most.

"They are all memorable in their own way," he said. **WL**

*L'Etoile also utilizes FRL Motorsports to promote breast cancer awareness in memory of his mother. Follow him on Facebook at FRL Motorsports Fan Page.*

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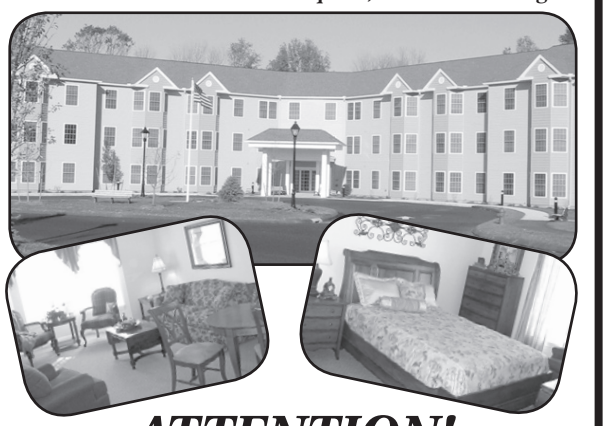

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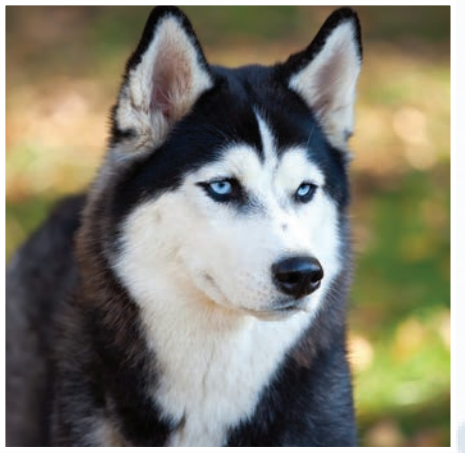

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# Slice of LIFE

photos by Lisa Brisson

**The Webb Barn was rocking in early November as the Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce held its inaugural "BBQ 'n Beer" fundraiser to help pay for the fireworks show at the annual "Food Fun & Fireworks" event at Cove Park next June 4. Chamber members, local businesspeople and others enjoyed barbecue food and beer on a warm fall evening.**

## BBQ 'n Beer

**1.** Board members Ivana Marrero and Diane McAdams, and Lynne Oliveri of Ward Kilduff Mortgage, handle the 50-50 raffle. **2.** Leslie Civitello, center, executive director of the chamber, visits with Nancy Albrecht and Angela Strodel. **3.** Olde Burnside Brewery's Meredith Blake happily pours a sample for William Raveis agent Tony Opalenil. **4.** Buffalo Wild Wings was a popular attraction for barbecue fare. Dishing out the wings are Anna Anisimora, Nicole Woodcock and Christina Plourde. **5.** Town Planning and Zoning Commission member George Oickle, standing, was among the town officials at the event. With him are Town Manager Jeff Bridges and Town Council members Mike Hurley and Michael Rell. **6.** Michael Klett of D'Esopo Funeral Chapel helps Stacey Hodges, chamber board member and past president, with pumping her beer. **7.** Kim Notaro, whose Kim's Flower Shop provided the floral centerpieces, hugs Stacey Hodges. **8.** William Raveis agents Annie Dillion and Sharon Carducci. **9.** Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce President Todd Lamore gets a hand from board members Alana DiMarco, Cristina Harris and Fran Proto. **10.** Stacy and Jaye Veley and Chris and Will Lamberti enjoy the evening. **11.** Chamber board member Diane McAdams thanks the many sponsors, including food providers Black Eyed Sally's, Max Bibo, Buffalo Wild Wings, Sammy's Buy Rite Liquors, Ten Penny Brewing Company and Olde Burnside Brewery of East Hartford.

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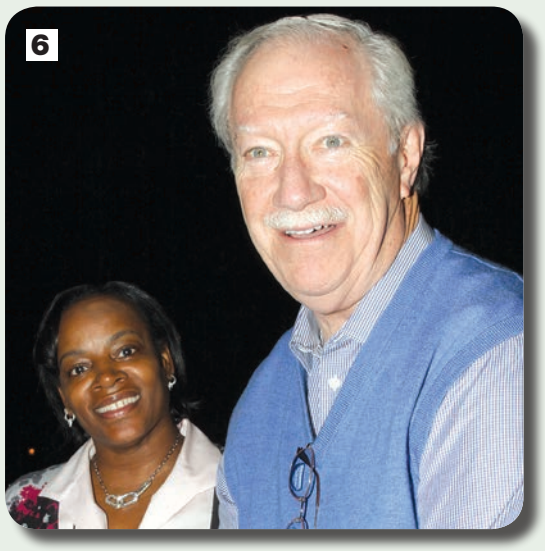
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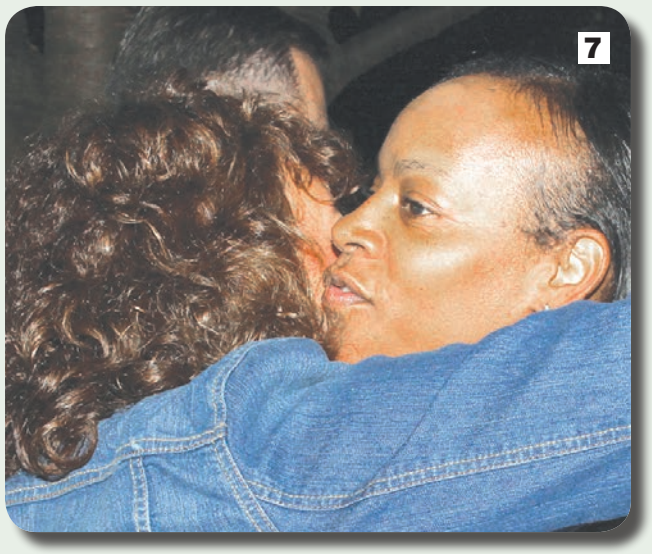
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# Your thoughts

***This month we asked local residents: "What is your favorite Thanksgiving side dish or dessert?" Here are some of their answers.***

"That would be cornbread sage sausage stuffing. Dessert would be fudge."

*– Brook Berry*

"My side dish is stuffing, my dessert is pecan pie."

*– Dorene Ciarcia*

"Stuffing."

*–Marilyn Lewis*

"How about stuffed pumpkin? You stuff it with a meat stuffing."

*– Claire Stanwicks*

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## LIFE Quotes

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*George Bernard Shaw*

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These Confirmation candidates greeted guests, sold tickets, waited on tables and performed other tasks.

Joe Mogelnicki, Tony Camilliere and Tony Mandile, from left, helped staff the kitchen.

Norman Rheaume and Sebastian Kolodziej from the House of Bread are greeted by Noranne Wamester and kitchen captains Mike Stefano and Tony Camilliere. Wamester is Incarnation's pastoral associate and director of the Office of Faith Formation.

Photos by Mark Jahne

# Soup for a cause

The Church of the Incarnation sponsored its annual Poor Person's Soup Supper in Father John Crawford Hall. An estimated 225 people attended the event and this year's Confirmation candidates volunteered their time to perform various tasks.

Adults who volunteered their time included Michael Hurley, Tom Fitzpatrick, Tom Forgetta, Javier Bello, Joe Mogelnicki, David Schroeder, Pat Adams, Tom Rocheleau, Carmelo Amoddio, Brian Heavren, Richard Bielak, James Darby, Tony Mandile, Joe Mascaro, Craig Saharek, Steven Susanin, Jeff Hopkins, Todd Bovino, Ro DiGiamcomo, Marco Paruta and Jim Miller.

A total of $1,371 was raised and donated to the House of Bread soup soup kitchen in Hartford and its Kids Café program that brings food to the various Boys Clubs and Girls Clubs in the city. The church also donated dozens of cupcakes.

Food establishments and families who donated soup and bread for the evening were Chimirri's Pastry Shoppe & Bakery, Carbone's Ristorante, Village Pizza House & Grinder, Casa Mia on the Green, Vito's Pizzaria, D&D Market, Mozzicato DePasquale Bakery & Pastry Shop, DeNovellis Family Restaurant, West Side Marketplace, Bill and Noranne Wamester, Sebastian Kolodziej and the Mandile family.

Mike Stefano and Noranne Wamester were the co-chairmen of the event and Alliance Graphics donated the tickets. **WL**


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*Fondly, Sharon*

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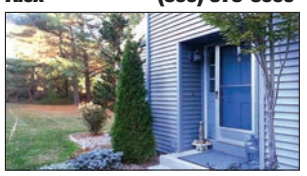

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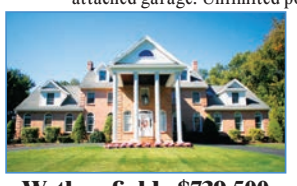

**Wethersfield $739,500**
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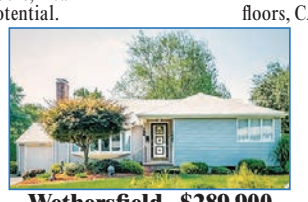

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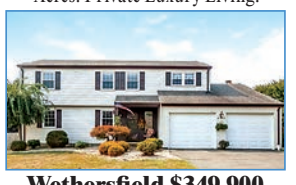

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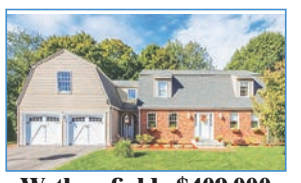

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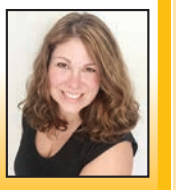

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## A Change to Embrace
### David Killeen joins Embrace Home Loans as Loan Officer

Embrace Home Loans is pleased to announce that David Killeen has joined their Rocky Hill, Connecticut branch as a Loan Officer. Killeen brings with him 15 years of experience in retail mortgage lending. Prior to joining Embrace, Killeen was Associate Vice President for Springfield Teachers Credit Union. Starting first as Sales Account Manager, Killeen quickly assumed the role of Branch Sales Manager in charge of business development. Ranking consistently among the top 10 account executives in the Northeast, Killeen managed multiple branches, increasing sales and improving customer service for the credit union's members.

Asked why he chose to move to Embrace now, Killeen responded, "I was impressed with the professionalism and competitive nature of the employees. The training, support and infrastructure are in place to provide loan officers with the information they need in a timely fashion. Embrace has a culture of success where I know I can thrive."

Killeen is optimistic about current market conditions. "Slow steady growth, low interest rates and price stabilization makes this a good time for first time home buyers."

Killeen was born in Springfield, Massachusetts and grew up in Longmeadow, MA where her resides today.

David Killeen NMLS# 33251, is employed by Embrace Home Loans and is licensed in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

About Embrace Home Loans: Founded in 1983, Embrace Home Loans is a direct lender for Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, approved by FHA and VA, and an issuer for Ginnie Mae. Embrace Home Loans has remained a prominent leader in the industry, having helped hundreds of thousands of individuals and their families purchase new homes, lower their monthly payments and consolidate high-interest debt since its inception. For more information, please visit www.embracehomeloans.com.

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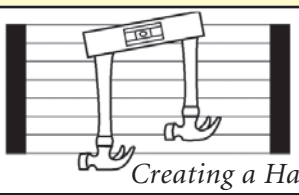
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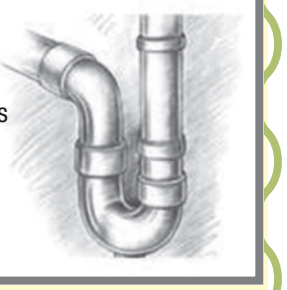


# Editorial

## A time to give thanks, not to whine

Americans love to complain. We whine about politics, the economy, the weather, our annoying relatives, the cost of food, the cost of electricity, the cost of everything.

We love our sports teams – unless they lose. Then we carry on about how the coach and all the players should be replaced by others who will win more frequently.

We complain about our parents and our spouses and our children, the people we supposedly love. And let's not forget about our jobs. Is there even one boss in the United States who does anything right?

It's our God-given right to carry on ad nauseam about anything and everything we don't like. It's one of the amendments to the Constitution, isn't it?

It is, sort of, if one lists it under the First Amendment and the right to free speech. But it sure gets tiring for those of us who have to listen to all that blather.

Even at its worst moments, this country still has more to offer than any other on earth. No other government and society is built on such a foundation of promoting and protecting individual freedoms.

We may not like the price of food, but at least there is plenty of it in the supermarket. We may not like the cost of electricity, but at least we can depend on it 24/7 unless there is a powerful storm that knocks down the wires for a few days.

In some countries you can go to jail for criticizing political leaders. Here you can go on talk radio or Twitter. Forget football or baseball, ranting about politics is rapidly becoming the national sport.

Thanksgiving is right around the corner with Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year's close behind. These are holidays that emphasize happiness and brotherhood. There are spiritual elements as well for those who choose to celebrate them.

Let's all tone down the whining for the next six weeks and try to share a smile instead of a critique. Let's all try getting into the spirit of the season and appreciate what we have instead of what we lack.

If politics upsets you, don't watch that portion of the news. If the boss is a jerk, concentrate on the co-workers you like instead. Make the time to spend with friends and family.

If you insist on expressing that right to rant, feel free to start again on Jan. 2. But until then let's all give our friends, family members and co-workers a break.

# Letter

## Saccente is a gem

*To the Editor:*

I read the article "A Friendly Face" about Johnny Saccente (November issue). I felt that the article was very touching and showed a lot about how much one person cares about a school and about how much one school cares about a person.

It really showed how much a person can do in their life and how hard one must work to live the life they want. It also explained how Johnny lived in Mexico for two and a half years and had a job, but his wife wanted to move back home, and so they did.

That goes to show how one would give up something they love for the people they love and how sometimes you have to make sacrifices in life. But like for Johnny, his sacrifice led to something great, working at Wethersfield High School, where he worked as a hall monitor and then as a security guard.

I really liked how well this article showed off Johnny's life and how great of a man he is and how he chooses to live his life to the fullest.

*– Alyssa Tonucci*

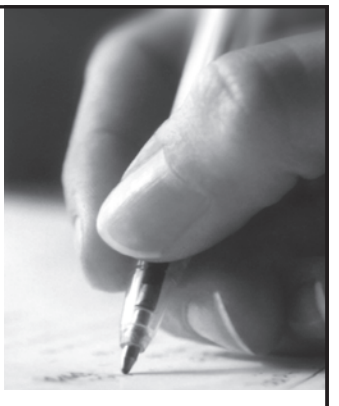
## Correction

A story in last month's issue stated that American Legion Post 23 member Howard Page served in combat during the Korean War. While he did serve, he was not involved in combat operations.

## Letters Policy

LIFE welcomes letters to the editor from our readers. Letters may be sent via traditional mail or e-mail. A full name and street address are required for publication.

Please include your telephone number for verification purposes. Letters should not exceed 300 words, and are subject to editing for accuracy, clarity, spelling, grammar, brevity and taste.



Mail letters to 540 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 0670 or email Abigail Albair, at aalbair@turleyct.com.


wethersfield LIFE

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# Letters

## Likes reading the newspaper

*To the Editor:*

I am a student at Wethersfield High School and I would like to say something that makes me happy and excited to read the monthly Wethersfield LIFE. I find it interesting to read about my beautiful town, not only because of the events it presents, but also because of the history it tells.

The texture of the newspaper brings my mind to the thought of 1634, the year this town was founded. As I feel the hard-to-forget, waxy feel of a newspaper, I read through each page with a smile.

Not only is there one article, but multiple, about our town's history, and not just the history before our time, but the history that is now currently in the making. I enjoy seeing the talent and accomplishments that are achieved and presented in Wethersfield.

I see it as our teachers and guardians doing something right. I feel as if this is a wonderful place to raise a family just because of the peaceful, hard-working place that this is.

Now that the holidays are coming, I can't wait to read about all of the upcoming events and stories that come in the further issues published. I don't think that any town gets more ready and presents its love for the town during the holidays better than our Wethersfield residents.

– *Amadea Star Mitusina*

## Enjoyed story about John Saccente

*To the Editor:*

I recently read the Wethersfield Life article, "A Friendly Face." As a senior in Wethersfield High School, I see Johnny Saccente every day when I enter the building and I am pleased that he is being recognized and appreciated for his presence in our school.

I also liked how this article covered his life previous to working in the high school and the life he lives now. This gave me insight and a further appreciation towards Johnny.

I found it interesting to learn all the things he has done throughout his life. I also found myself having pride in the teachers, students, and staff for making an impact on Johnny's enjoyment in the school.

I loved learning more about the friendly man I wave to every day when I enter and exit through the doors of my school and I love how the town shows appreciation to its citizens who help shape Wethersfield. – *Kacey Friedman*

## Grateful for teenagers

*To the Editor:*

On Sunday, Oct. 11, some friends and I ventured to the South End of Hartford to watch the Columbus Day Parade on Franklin Avenue. We parked half way down Adelaide Street and walked on deplorable sidewalks toward the corner of Franklin Avenue, where the Wethersfield band was practicing prior to participating in the parade. Due to the sidewalk conditions, I fell and sustained cuts on my hand and some bruises. Four members of the Wethersfield band immediately rushed over to offer assistance.

They helped me to a chair and volunteered to get a band staff woman who had a first aid bag. She proceeded to wipe my bloody hand, apply antiseptic and bandaged the cuts.

I want to express my thanks to these fine young teenagers who helped me. Since the students had to rush off to join the parade, I wasn't able to properly thank them.

So often all we hear about is the bad behavior of young people. These Wethersfield students were kind, polite and helpful. They are a credit to the band, Wethersfield High School and their parents.

The Wethersfield band played beautifully, a big credit to Wethersfield. – *Sue Fusco*

## Pops is the best

*To the Editor:*

The teachers and students of Wethersfield high school appreciate that you have taken the time to interview Wethersfield High School's very own legend John Saccente, also known as "Pops." The article "A Living Legend" really gives an inside look of Saccente's life that Wethersfield staff and students didn't know.

For example, I had no idea that Saccente works as a park ranger at Mill Woods Park. I thought that this was very interesting, especially since Saccente is 89 years old. I guess hanging around teenagers all the time really does keep you young.

I also thought this was a cool article because it kind of showed a little of how things used to be back in the days; for instance, when Saccente describes the days where he would go to Capitol Park on Wethersfield Avenue to ride the roller coasters, Ferris wheels and merry-go-rounds.

Overall, the article was really fun to read and I enjoyed learning more about Pops.

– *Christina Faienza*

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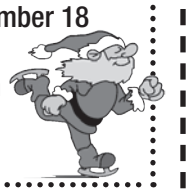

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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]

# From Autumn, to Winter...

After a stunning show of colors this fall across Connecticut, it's time for winter – but what will the season hold for us, this time?

Making big headlines: El Nino, and the fact that this year's is one of the strongest on record. It's the warming of the Pacific Ocean that can have a big influence on large scale weather patterns. Typically with a strong El Nino, in our part of the country, we can expect a milder but also wetter than normal season.

There are many other factors that play into a long-range outlook. Also remember that while it very well could, on average, be warmer than normal... we can still get outbreaks of very cold air. Adding to the complexity is determining the frequency of storms and how intense they will be in Connecticut.

Speaking of storms, in case you're not familiar, WFSB has been naming winter storms since 1971 (back to the days of the Travelers Weather Service). It's a tradition WFSB is proud to carry on here in the state of Connecticut, now in its 5th decade!

A storm has to meet certain criteria in order to be named: we must expect at least 6 inch of snow for much of the state, and/or ½ inch of ice accretion (that would be a significant ice storm). Given we are going into a presidential election year, the theme for this season will be former First Ladies! **WL**

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** Purchase any 2 Sailun brand tires at regular price and get two FREE. Present ad for savings. Requires installation with our standard installation package. Expires 11/29/15.*

## PLUS! With every 4 Tire Purchase You Choose

**4 FREE Lube, Oil & Filters** OR

Incl. up to 5 qts Mobil Special 5w30 motor oil, oil filter, lube & courtesy ck. Most Vehicles.

**FREE Front End Alignment** OR

Specialty, Thrust Angle and Complete 4 Wheel Alignments are additional - see store for your vehicle's alignment type.

**FREE Road Hazard Protection**

Covers FREE Flat Repairs and Tire Replacement for Road Hazards - See store for full coverage details.

## $20 OFF ANYTHING

Lube, Oil & Filter • Heating • Tune Up
Wiper Blades • Headlights & Bulbs
Coolant Service • Tire Rotation
Batteries • Tires • Shocks/Struts
Brakes • Electrical • Transmission
Alignment • Diagnostic

**$50 OFF ANY SERVICE Over $200**

**$100 OFF ANY SERVICE Over $500**

*Present Coupon for savings. Excludes Tire Service and Emissions. Not valid with other discounts. Not combinable. Exp. 11/29/15.*

### EXPRESS LUBE, OIL & FILTER

$19.99

Includes up to 5 qts. Mobil Special 5W-30 motor oil, oil filter, lubrication & courtesy check. Most cars.

Plus FREE TIRE ROTATION

*Must present coupon. Not valid with any other discounts. Expires 11/29/15. Oil disposal fee add'l.*

### BRAKE PADS or SHOES

$99.99 installed, per axle
Most vehicles

Brake systems are complex. Stop by or call for a convenient appointment to have our experts inspect your system.

There may be extra costs for additional parts and labor.

FREE BRAKE INSPECTION
Let our staff inspect your brake system.

*Must present coupon. Expires 11/29/15. Not valid with any other discounts.*

### FALL CAR CARE

*Get Ready for cooler weather!...*

$29.99

- Brake Inspection
- Standard 5 qt. oil change & filter
- Tire Rotation and Air Pressure Set
- Battery Test -- Underhood fluid check
- Courtesy check of lights, belts, wipers, suspension, filters and more.

*Must present coupon for savings. Most cars and light trucks. Expires 11/29/15. Not available with other discounts. Oil disposal fee add'l.*

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